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ABSTRACT

In 2001, the Pennsylvania Department of Education contracted with Western Michigan University to evaluate Pennsylvania's charter schools and charter school initiative over two years. The study used site visits, work sample review, document review, focus groups, portfolios and surveys to gather data regarding the movement's effectiveness, progress, and impact. The report focuses on methods, descriptions of the reform, charter school startup challenges, finances, student and family characteristics, teacher and staff characteristics, working conditions, professional development, satisfaction levels, innovation, equity, accountability, student achievement, and alternative indicators of charter school quality. Overall, charter schools were making modest achievement gains against demographically and geographically similar schools, although the gains were not uniform. Charter school customers were generally satisfied with the curriculum and instruction, though less so with facilities and resources. There were some charter-host school differences in enrollment of low-income, minority, and special education students. Teachers were generally satisfied with their working conditions but left charter schools in high numbers. Pennsylvania's charter schools received significant technical assistance, making them aware of relevant rules and regulations. There was minimal diffusion of innovation from charter to noncharter schools. Includes 71 tables/figures. Appended are teacher/staff, student, and parent survey results as well as demographic information on charter school students and teachers. (Contains 57 references.) (SM)

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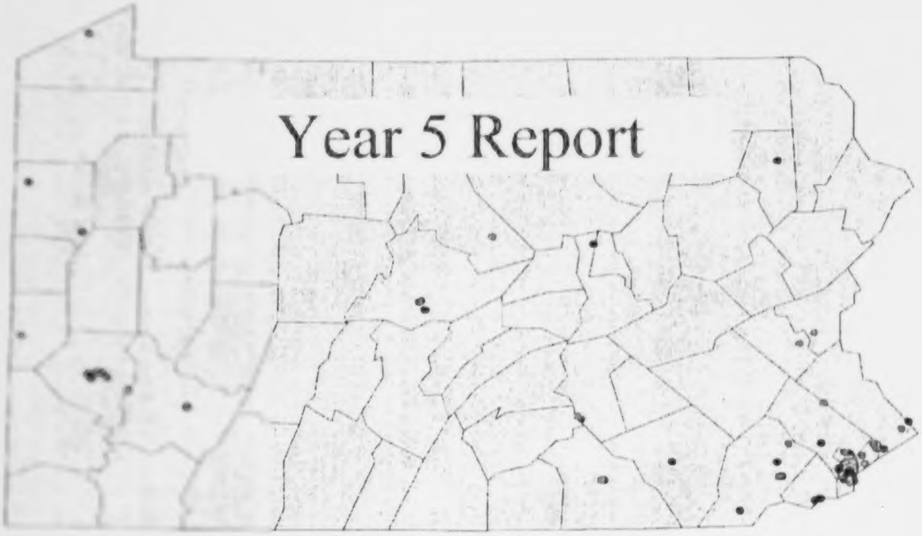
Strengthening Pennsylvania's Charter School Reform:

Findings From the Statewide Evaluation and Discussion of Relevant Policy Issues

Year 5 Report



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and John Risley

with Carolyn Sullins

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents i
List of Tables and Figures iv
List of Acronyms vii
Acknowledgments viii

Chapter 1 Introduction 1
  1.1 What Are Charter Schools? 1
  1.2 Evaluation Questions 3
  1.3 Review of Past and Future Research on Charter Schools in Pennsylvania 4
  1.4 Structure of the Report 5

Chapter 2 Methods 7
  2.1 Approach and Strategies for Data Collection 7
  2.2 Specific Methods for Data Collection 10
  2.3 Data Analyses and Reporting 14
  2.4 Limitations to the Evaluation 16
  2.5 Challenges Confronting the Evaluation 17

Chapter 3 Description and Background of the Reform in Pennsylvania 19
  3.1 An Overview of Pennsylvania's Charter School Law 19
  3.2 Changes in Charter School Law and Regulations 24
  3.3 Growth Trends 26
  3.4 Charter School Location 27
  3.5 Role of Education Management Organizations and Nonprofit Community-Based Organizations 35
  3.6 Cyber Schools 36
  3.7 Conclusion 39

Chapter 4 Charter School Start-Up: Resources and Challenges . . 40
  4.1 Legal and Administrative Context 41
  4.2 The Charter Appeals Board 43
  4.3 Founders' Goals 46
  4.4 Founders' Organizational Resources 47
  4.5 Types of Individuals Involved in Charter Founding Coalitions . . . 49
  4.6 Political Constraints and Opportunities 51
  4.7 Characteristics of Chartering Districts 52
  4.8 Summary 55

Chapter 5 Charter School Finance 57
- 5.1 Revenue Sources 58
- 5.2 Special Education Funding 60
- 5.3 Expenditure Patterns 61
- 5.4 Fiscal Viability 66
- 5.5 Summary and Conclusions 68

Chapter 6 Student and Family Characteristics 70
- 6.1 Sampling of Students and Parents 70
- 6.2 Description of Charter School Students and Families 72
- 6.3 Reasons for Choosing Charter Schools, Responses from Sampled Students and Parents 80
- 6.4 Awareness of School Mission 83
- 6.5 Summary 83

Chapter 7 Teacher and Staff Characteristics 85
- 7.1 Description of Charter School Teachers and Staff 85
- 7.2 Educational Background and Years of Experience of Pennsylvania Charter School Teachers and Staff 88
- 7.3 Reasons to Seek Employment at a Charter School 91
- 7.4 School Mission 92
- 7.5 Summary 93

Chapter 8 Working Conditions, Professional Development and Levels of Satisfaction for Charter School Teachers 95
- 8.1 Working Conditions for Teachers and Staff and Levels of Satisfaction 95
- 8.2 Initial Expectations and Current Experiences of Teachers and Staff 100
- 8.3 Professional Development in Pennsylvania Charter Schools 101
- 8.4 Teacher Induction Plans 104
- 8.5 Turnover of Teachers and Staff in Pennsylvania Charter Schools . 105
- 8.6 Summary 106

Chapter 9 Innovation 108
- 9.1 Conceptualization and Methods 108
- 9.2 Mission and Target Population 110
- 9.3 School Organization 111
- 9.4 Curriculum and Instruction 113
- 9.5 Technology and Computers 114
- 9.6 Cyber Schools 115
- 9.7 Impacts of Charter Schools on Local Districts 116
- 9.8 Discussion and Conclusions 118

Chapter 10 Equity and Access 120
10.1 Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Charter Schools 120
10.2 Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch 122
10.3 Enrollment of Students with Disabilities 124
10.4 Satisfaction of Parents of Children with Special Needs 127
10.5 Why Students Leave Charter Schools 128
10.6 Summary and Conclusions 130

Chapter 11 Accountability 132
11.1 Accountability Plan for Pennsylvania Charter Schools 132
11.2 Mission-Driven Schools 133
11.3 Demonstrating Success: Goals and Objectives Based on Mission Statement 134
11.4 Findings from the Auditor General 141
11.5 Roles and Responsibilities of PDE 144
11.6 Roles and Responsibilities of Districts that Grant Charters 144
11.7 Conclusion and Summary 145

Chapter 12 Student Achievement 147
12.1 Assessing Charter School Effectiveness 148
12.2 Key Findings 150
12.3 Summary and Conclusions 153

Chapter 13 Alternative Indicators of Charter School Quality 155
13.1 Waiting Lists 155
13.2 Perceived Achievement Gains 156
13.3 Satisfaction with Accomplishment of School Missions 157
13.4 Satisfaction with Curriculum and Instruction 158
13.5 Satisfaction with Resources 161
13.6 The Relationship Between Customer Satisfaction and Academic Performance 162
13.7 Summary 164

Chapter 14 Key Findings and Policy Issues 165
14.1 Student Achievement 165
14.2 Choice and Innovation 167
14.3 Equity and Access 170
14.4 Professional Opportunities for Teachers 172
14.5 Accountability and Oversight 174
14.6 Impacts on Other Public Schools 176
14.7 Future Evaluation Activities 179
14.8 Conclusion 179
References 181
Appendices 185

List of Tables, Figures and Appendices

Tables

Table 2:1 Data Collection Strategies and Information Sources 8
Table 2:2 Matrix of Study Objectives and Sources of Information 9
Table 2:3 Sample Size and Response Rates for Charter School Surveys 13
Table 3:1 Charter School Enrollments as Percent of Total Public School Enrollment by County 34
Table 4:1 Regional Charter Schools, Fall 2002 43
Table 4:2 Organizational Bases of Pennsylvania Charter Schools 49
Table 4:3 Chartering and Nonchartering Districts Compared 54
Table 5:1 Mean Per Pupil Operating Revenue by Source 59
Table 5:2 Charter School Per-Pupil Expenditures Compared With Host Districts 61
Table 5:3 Percentage of Total Expenditures Devoted to Instruction, 2000-01 62
Table 5:4 Per-Pupil Operating Expenditures for Charter Schools and Host Districts by Function, 1999-00 63
Table 5:5 Per Pupil Expenditures by Object, 1999-00 64
Table 5:6 Per-Pupil Expenditures on Instruction, by Academic Program 65
Table 5:7 Summary of Indicators Related to Financial Viability: Financial Margins, Financial Reserves, and Financial Position 68
Table 6:1 Median Stability Rates for Students Enrolled in Charter Schools and Host Districts 79
Table 6:2 Parents' Reasons for Choosing Their Charter School, Rank Ordered by Mean Scores, 2002 80
Table 6:3 Students' Reasons for Choosing Their Charter School, Rank Ordered by Mean Scores, 2002 83
Table 7:1 Age Distribution of Charter School Teachers Compared with National Distribution 87
Table 7:2 Classroom Teachers as a Percentage of All Professional Staff 87
Table 7:3 Role and Amount of Formal Education, 2001-02 89
Table 7:4 Role and Highest Academic Degree, 2001-02 89
Table 7:5 Level of Teacher Education by Survey Year 90
Table 7:6 Years of Experience by Role and in Various Types of School 90
Table 7:7 Reasons for Seeking Employment at This School 91
Table 7:8 Level of Satisfaction with the Mission of the School, 2001-02 93
Table 8:1 Teacher Expectations and Current Experience With Regard to Innovative Practices and Autonomy 97
Table 8:2 Average Teacher Salary in Charter and Noncharter Public Schools 99
Table 8:3 Levels of Teachers and Staff Satisfaction with Working Condition 99

Table 9:1 Nontraditional Grade Groupings in Charter Schools, 2001-02 .. 111

Table 9:2 Comparison of Internet Access in Charter and Noncharter Public Schools, 2000-01 115

Table 11:1 Quality of Goals by Type of Form Used for Reporting Goals and Status of Attainment in 2001-02 Annual Report 141

Table11:2 Proportion of Schools/Districts With Findings of Weakness Identified in Audits Conducted by the State Auditor General .. 143

Table 12:1 Growth Rates in Filtered PSSA Scores 152

Table 13:1 Charter School Waiting Lists as a Percentage of Current Enrollment, 2001-02 156

Table 13:2 Student Self-Rated Academic Performance at Previous and Current School 157

Table 13:3 Parents' Perceptions of Student Achievement Gains 157

Table 13:4 Items Included in Index of Student Satisfaction with Teachers and Instruction 159

Table 13:5 Index of Parents' Satisfaction With Curriculum and Instruction 159

Table 13:6 Index of Teachers' Satisfaction With Curriculum and Instruction 160

Table 13:7 Index of Teachers' Satisfaction With Resources 162

Figures

Figure 3:1 Growth in the Number of Schools and Students in Pennsylvania Charter Schools 27

Figure 3:2 Pennsylvania Charter Schools by Year Opened 29

Figure 3:3 Pennsylvania Charter Schools by Enrollment 30

Figure 3:4 Southeastern Pennsylvania Charter Schools by Year Opened ... 31

Figure 3:5 Southeastern Pennsylvania Charter Schools by Enrollment 32

Figure 3:6 Enrollment Distribution for Small Samples of Cyber School Families in 2001-02, Sorted by School 37

Figure 3:7 Enrollment Distribution for a Single Cyber School in 2001-02 ... 38

Figure 4:1 Distribution of Charter Schools by Presence and Nature of Organizational Base 49

Figure 6:1 Distribution of Sampled Students by Grade 73

Figure 6:2 Distribution of Pennsylvania Charter School Students by Grade . 73

Figure 6:3 Distribution of All Pennsylvania Charter School Students and Sampled Students and Parents by Race/Ethnicity, 2001-02 74

Figure 6:4 Type of School Attended Before Charter School: Responses from Sampled Students and Parents, 2002 78

Figure 7:1 Distribution of Sampled Teachers and Other Staff by Grade 88

Figure 9:1 Charter Appeals Board Definition of Innovation 109

Figure 9:2 Average Class Size in Charter and Noncharter Schools, 1999-00. 112

Figure 10:1 Percent White Students Enrolled in Charter Schools and Host Districts 121

Figure 10:2 Distribution of Charter School Students by Race/Ethnicity in 2001-02 122

Figure 10:3 Percent of Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch Enrolled in Charter Schools and Host Districts 123

Figure 10:4 Special Education Enrollments for Charter Schools and the Commonwealth, 2001-02 125

Figure 10:5 Percentage of Enrolled Students With IEPs by Category 125

Figure 10:6 Distribution of Students with Disabilities by Category 126

Figure 10:7 Proportion of Students with Disabilities in Charter Schools and Host Districts 127

Figure 11:1 Ratings of Goals and Objectives in Terms of the Scope and Coverage of School Mission 137

Figure 11:2 Degree of Measurability of Charter School Goals and Objectives 139

Figure 11:3 Scope of Evidence in the 2001-02 Annual Reports Relevant to the Stated Goals and Objectives 140

Figure 12:1 Trends in Filtered Scores, by First Year of Operation 150

Figure 12:2 Gains on PSSA Scaled Score for Charter Schools and Comparison Groups by Cohort 151

Figure 12:3 Variation in Annual Growth Rates Across Charter Schools 152

Figure 13:1 Percent of Teachers and Parents Agreeing that School Mission is Being Followed "Well" or "Very Well" 158

Figure 13:2 Academic Performance and Customer Satisfaction Compared for 40 Charter Schools 161

Figure 13:3 PSSA Gains and Self-Reported Gains Compared 163

Appendices

Appendix A Teacher/Staff Survey Results

Appendix B Student Survey Results

Appendix C Parent Survey Results

Appendix D Demographic and Background Characteristics of Charter School Students Compared with Host District Students

Appendix E Demographic and Background Characteristics of Charter School Teachers

Appendix F Methodological Details on the Analysis of Student Achievement Results

List of Acronyms

ADM	Average Daily Member
AFR	Annual Financial Report
CAB	Charter Appeals Board
CAOs	Chief administrative officers
CISC	Central Instructional Support Center
COE	Current operating expenditures
CSS	Charter School Survey
CSPD	Pennsylvania State Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
CTBS	Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills
EMOs	Education management organizations
FTEs	Full-Time Equivalents
FAPE	Free appropriate public education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEPs	Individual Education Plans
ISSP	Instructional Support System of Pennsylvania
ITBS	Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
ITED	Iowa Test of Educational Development
IU	Intermediate Unit
KEC	Keystone Education Center Charter School
LEAs	Local Education Agencies
MAT	Metropolitan Achievement Test
NCEs	Normal Curve Equivalents
NCES	The National Center for Education Statistics
NGO	Nongovernment Organizations
OEI	Office of Educational Initiatives
PDE	Pennsylvania Department of Education
PEPS	Pennsylvania Educational Policy Studies
PSSA	Pennsylvania System of School Assessment
RFP	Request for Proposal
SASS	School and Staffing Survey
SAT	Stanford Achievement Test
SCS	School Climate Survey
WMU	Western Michigan University
WRAT	Wide Range Achievement Test

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As always, the authors are responsible for any errors.

Gary Miron, Christopher Nelson, and John Risley

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Chapter One
Introduction

Act 22, the Pennsylvania charter school law, calls for an evaluation of the charter school program after five years of implementation (Act 22, section 1728-A). The charter school reform was initiated in 1997; therefore an evaluation of the overall program is due in 2002. The Evaluation Center has conducted this evaluation pursuant to a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and in fulfillment of the mandate in the Commonwealth's charter school law.

This evaluation builds upon an earlier 17-month study entitled "The Initial Study of Pennsylvania Charter Schools" completed by The Evaluation Center in September 2000. In 2001, PDE contracted with us to undertake a second, more summative evaluation of the reform, which is to last nearly three years. This second evaluation commenced in April 2001 and will end in October 2003. Given that the fifth year of the reform falls in the second year of this three year study, our main deliverable will coincide with the fifth year anniversary of the reform. During the third and last year of our contract we will focus more on innovative practices in the schools with the intent of understanding how these can be shared or applied in other schools. We will also explore a number of policy issues raised in this report and—by engaging stakeholders and policymakers in this discussion—we hope to be able to formulate recommendations about specific steps that can be taken to strengthen the charter school reform in Pennsylvania.

While building on earlier analyses, findings in this report lay the groundwork for making summative judgments and raising policy issues that deserve consideration. This report considers data collected by the evaluation team from charter schools and key stakeholder groups in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002. The study also builds on longitudinal data provided to us by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. As in our earlier reports, our findings are generally mixed and, based on the student achievement, slightly positive. However, as the title of this report suggests, we believe that the charter school reform can be strengthened to help ensure that charter schools can better address the high expectations that policymakers had for them back in 1997 when Act 22 was approved.

1.1 What Are Charter Schools?

Broadly understood, charter schools are public schools that operate under a contractual arrangement with a chartering entity such as a state, a local board of education, or an independent chartering authority. The chartering contract frees schools from most traditional public school system rules and regulations in exchange for increased accountability for student learning and other outcomes.

Although laws differ from state to state as to what entities can found a charter school or apply for a charter, in Pennsylvania charter schools can be created by individuals or groups, including educators, parents, community members, and nonprofit organizations. While for-profit organizations cannot apply for or hold a charter, they have been instrumental in establishing some of the charter schools. A charter is signed by its founding members and a chartering agency and details what the school expects to accomplish with respect to student achievement and other outcomes. Unlike traditional public schools, a charter school may be closed by its chartering entity if it fails to meet the standards set forth in the charter.

Charter schools are intended to provide alternative and diverse educational programs with the goal of improving academic achievement. The intent behind this new form of public schooling is that by providing further autonomy to charter schools, they can pursue innovative teaching practices and create a diversity of school options from which parents can choose.

Nationally, the charter school movement began in 1991 with the passage of Minnesota's charter school law. California followed suit in 1992 with the passage of its own law. Since then, each year has seen the addition of several new charter school laws. At last count, 39 states and the District of Columbia had enacted charter school laws. Pennsylvania's Act 22 was passed in 1997, the year when similar legislation was passed in Mississippi, Nevada, and Ohio (RPP International, 2000). Initially, 6 charter schools were approved to operate in Pennsylvania in 1997, and the total number grew to 31 in 1998, 47 during 1999, 66 in 2000, and 76 in 2001. Currently, in the 2002-03 school year, 90 charter schools are operating across the state. Chapter 3 provides a more detailed overview of the growth of the charter school movement in Pennsylvania.

Critics and skeptics have charged that the charter school concept is an "empty vessel"; that is, an expansive opportunity space in which a wide variety of governance structures, school policies, curricula, and instructional methods could be employed. Whether true or not, the charge stems from two features of the charter school concept.[1] First, the concept has attracted followers from both the political left and the political right—from the ranks of teacher unions to ardent advocates of privatization. Wells et al. (1999), for instance, interviewed key policymakers in six states and found that while some charter proponents simply seek to reform the public school system without turning to vouchers, others see charter schools as a steppingstone on the way to a full-blown voucher system. Thus, the charter concept has proved to be quite flexible politically. Second, when compared with other education reform packages, the charter concept is quite agnostic on many core issues, including curriculum, instruction, assessment, and others. Indeed, by design, the concept counsels policymakers to delegate most decisions on choice of educational interventions to individual schools and their stakeholders and thus is similar to site-based management reforms. The charter concept, in short, gives enhanced autonomy to schools in the belief that doing so will unleash previously unrealized potential that already exists in schools, ultimately leading to improvements in student achievement. Hence, like current reforms from across the public policy spectrum, the charter concept seeks to replace "one-size-fits-all" solutions with an "empty vessel" that charter schools can fill with their own experience and innovation (RPP International, 1998).

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[1] We use the term "charter school concept" to denote the generic set of ideas that characterizes most or all charter school laws. We distinguish the charter concept from its operationalization in particular state charter laws, such as Act 22.

Charter school autonomy, however, does not come as a blank check. Instead, charter schools purchase their autonomy in exchange for greater accountability. Charter proponents, moreover, have in mind a particular kind of accountability, one they believe is more compatible with school autonomy than older versions. According to proponents of the charter concept, traditional school policies hold schools accountable for *inputs* and *processes* (e.g., "number of hours" requirements) in the belief that if schools adhere to these rules they will, as a matter of course, produce desired student outcomes. Such accountability designs assume that central policymakers have enough knowledge about the effects of educational processes to prescribe the right inputs and processes for a given set of outcomes.

The newer "performance accountability" design, by contrast, turns this relationship on its head. Advocates are typically skeptical of central policy makers' knowledge of and wisdom about education. For this reason, instead of prescribing means in the belief that doing so would generate the right ends, performance accountability designs prescribe policy goals in the belief that teachers, administrators, and other officials "on the ground" are best able to design effective and efficient means toward those goals. In short, performance accountability refocuses accountability and monitoring from inputs and processes to outputs and outcomes. Accordingly, school officials (and other public administrators) receive more autonomy in deciding *how* to pursue policy goals and perhaps less autonomy over *what* those goals ought to be. Thus, where critics see an empty vessel in the charter concept, charter proponents see flexibility, innovation and, ultimately, improved student outcomes. In many respects, the purpose of this evaluation is to determine whether this autonomy-accountability bargain leads, as promised, to improved student outcomes. We turn next to the specific evaluation questions underlying this study.

1.2 Evaluation Questions

Section 1702-A of Act 22 identifies the following goals of Pennsylvania's charter school law:

- ☐ improve pupil learning
- ☐ increase learning opportunities for all pupils
- ☐ encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods
- ☐ create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site
- ☐ provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system
- ☐ hold charter schools accountable for meeting measurable academic standards and provide the school with a method to establish accountability systems

From these general goals flow the specific evaluation questions addressed in this project:

1. What are promising practices in charter schools that could be included in district systemic reform?
2. Is there evidence that, over the term of the charter, student learning has significantly improved?
3. Does increased flexibility in exchange for increased accountability result in improved pupil results? Which waivers have more impact, and which are seen as most important?
4. Are the opportunities offered to charter school teachers, parents, and students to influence classroom and school policy significantly different from those offered at traditional public schools?
5. Are the opportunities (i.e., professional growth, salaries, benefits, employee rights) for teachers and other employees significantly different at a charter school than at a traditional public school?
6. What happens to students who leave charter schools?

It is important to note that in some sense, question 3 on the accountability-autonomy bargain pervades the entire evaluation. Moreover, there is considerable overlap between questions 2 and 3, both of which involve assessments of student achievement.

1.3 Review of Past and Future Research on Charter Schools in Pennsylvania

A lot has been written about Pennsylvania's charter school reform. To date, however, many of these pieces have been focused on making theoretical or policy arguments and have not been firmly grounded in data or evidence. Given that the reform is now five years old and given that the charter school reform has stirred considerable debate, we can expect more studies to be released in the coming years.

Thus far, aside from our own earlier study (Miron & Nelson, 2000), a few other studies or evaluations have been released that examine charter schools in Pennsylvania. The two most noteworthy are the Meister and Schuh (2000) study of Philadelphia charter schools and the KPMG (2001) evaluation of cyber schools in Pennsylvania.

The Meister and Schuh study focused on start-up and implementation challenges and solutions. The researchers identified barriers to start-up such as facilities, finance, tight time lines, and relations with the School District of Philadelphia. Special education, student discipline, recruitment of teachers were among a number of problem areas that the study identified. In terms of recommendations, better communication between charter schools and their stakeholders, access to technical assistance, and more funding were emphasized.

The KPMG study reviewed Pennsylvania's cyber charter schools, concentrating on curriculum, school governance, funding structures, and cost-effectiveness. The authors found that cyber charters appeared to be in compliance with state requirements regarding teacher certification, hours of instruction, and having a method for authenticating student work. The report recommended an expansion of the information required in cyber charter school applications. The authors also recommended that Pennsylvania consider setting a cyber school funding amount for all approved cyber charter schools.

Aside from these two studies, we are aware of studies being conducted by university faculty or graduate students from Pennsylvania State University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Pittsburgh, and George Washington University that consider various aspects of Pennsylvania's charter school reform. The three resource centers that have served charter schools in the Commonwealth (i.e., the Charter Schools Project at Duquesne University and Drexel University/Foundations Inc. and the Pennsylvania Charter School Resource Center) have not only provided technical assistance to the charter schools, but also have been an important source of data and documentation about charters schools. Foundations Inc. was involved in the Meister and Schuh (2000) study noted above, and the Duquesne Charter Schools Project prepared policy analyses that considered such issues as the State Charter School Appeal Board (Duquense Charter Schools Project, 2000) and prepared an array of documents on such matters as school accountability. Research by these and other academic groups will certainly contribute to the still limited knowledge base about Pennsylvania charter schools.

1.4 Structure of the Report

The first part of the report provides important background information on Pennsylvania's charter school law and on the evaluation itself. Chapter 2 summarizes the methods used to gather and analyze data. This chapter is quite general, leaving detailed discussions of methods to later chapters. Chapter 3 completes the background part by providing a description and context of the reform, including the legislative and regulatory framework, overview of location and patterns of growth of the schools, and a description of the involvement of education management organizations (EMOs) and the more recent emergence of cyber schools.

The second part of the report considers some of the most important inputs to charter schools. First, the process by which charter applications are proposed and ultimately granted or denied is the first important hurdle would-be school operators must face. The charter application and approval process, therefore, influences the range of charter school opportunities available to students, parents, and teachers. It is also the first important step in the accountability process, as local school districts and other actors seek to identify important student needs and ensure that charter schools will effectively produce desirable student outcomes. Thus, chapter 4 includes a discussion of the legal and administrative contexts of charter school start-up (including the role of the State Charter School Appeal Board), the goals and resources of the "founding coalitions" that have received charters, and the key demographic and political characteristics of districts that have chosen to grant charters.

The third part of the report continues with a preliminary analysis of charter school finance. Autonomy requires both discretion (the freedom to develop and implement educational policies at the school level) and resources. Hence, any discussion of charter school autonomy must include an analysis of charter schools' revenue sources, general spending priorities, and capacity to budget and plan effectively. The part of the report dealing with inputs concludes with a pair of chapters examining the key demographic characteristics of charter school students, parents, and teachers. A generation of scholarly research on educational productivity beginning with Coleman (1966) suggests that schools' ability to produce student outcomes is conditioned by students' family and community backgrounds. Thus, these chapters lay the foundation for the chapter (in the fourth part) on student test scores. The chapters on students, parents, and teachers also examine some of the attitudinal characteristics of these actors. Indeed, charter school theorists often argue that participants' commitment to a school's mission and school leaders' ability to form coherent "teams" are crucial to charter school success.

The fourth part of the report examines some of the educational processes Pennsylvania charter schools have employed to date. Chapter 8 examines teacher professional development and other features of teacher working conditions in charter schools. Chapter 9 examines innovations in Pennsylvania's charter schools and explores charter schools' governance practices as well as curriculum, instructional techniques, and assessment methods. Chapter 10 considers equity and access in Pennsylvania charter schools.

The fifth and final part of the report examines several sets of outcomes. Chapter 11 delves into issues concerning accountability. Chapter 12 provides an in-depth analysis of scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). As we note in the report, there is a legitimate debate about the precise student outcomes for which charter schools should be held accountable. The debate is particularly poignant for the significant number of charter schools that serve at-risk[2] populations. Moreover, some have argued that a more appropriate measure of charter school success than test scores is "market accountability"—the extent to which parents and students have "voted with their feet" for charter schools. Thus, chapter 13 supplements the picture of school success provided in chapter 12 with an examination of a number of alternative indicators. These include student and teacher perceptions of school quality, transfers into and out of charter schools, attendance, and various aspects of the schools' educational climates and cultures.

The final chapter provides a summary of major findings and then discusses relevant policy issues and highlights areas that deserve/require further research or evaluation.

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[2] There are a number of differing definitions of "at-risk" (See Pallas, 1989). We primarily use the term in reference to students who are likely to perform far below state norms and are at risk of dropping out of school.

Chapter Two
Methods

The wide variety of evaluation questions outlined in chapter 1 required a multi-method approach to data collection and analysis. Our aim was to collect enough information to analyze all charter schools individually as well as among groups of schools with similar characteristics. The data collected allowed us to provide feedback information to individual schools to help them make improvements as well as to address the evaluation questions regarding the charter school reform as a whole. Since our mandate was to evaluate the charter school reform, rather than individual schools, this interim report focuses on generalizations across the charter schools and does not make judgments about individual schools. Decisions regarding the nature and type of data to be collected were made in consultation with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to ensure that they are worthwhile and of interest to decision makers and other interested parties. All final decisions about evaluation methodology, findings, and interpretation were made by the evaluation team alone.

2.1 Approach and Strategies for Data Collection

The following data collection methods were employed:

☐ Surveys of staff, students, and parents (charter school surveys developed by The Evaluation Center and nationally normed school climate surveys)

☐ Reviews of student work samples (when available)

☐ Interviews

☐ Document review

☐ Portfolios (if available)

☐ Direct observation

☐ Focus group meetings

☐ Analysis of test scores and available demographic and financial data

The general strategies for collecting information are summarized in Table 2:1. Table 2:2 is a matrix of the evaluation questions and sources of data/information for each question.

Table 2:1 Data Collection Strategies and Information Sources

Strategy/ Source	Question-naires	Interviews	Document Review	Focus Groups	Achievement Data	School Profiles	Direct Observation
Students	X			X	X		X
Teachers	X	X		X			X
School CAOs/ Directors	X	X					X
Parents	X	X		X			
Local School Districts that Charter		X	X				
Community Members		X					
PDE Personnel		X	X				
School Records			X				
Schools			X		X		X

Table 2:2 Matrix of Study Objectives and Sources of Information

General Objectives of the Study	Charter School Surveys (for teachers/staff, students, and parents/guardians	School Climate Survey (for teachers/staff, students, and parents/guardians	Interviews	Document Review	Focus Group	Achievment Data (PSSA)	PSSA School Profiles/ Indicators	Direct Observaation
What are promising practices in charter schools that could be included in district systemic reform?			X	X	X		X	X
Is there evidence that, over the term of the charter, student learning has significantly improved?	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Does increased flexibility in exchange for increased accountability result in improved pupil results?	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Are opportunities offered to charter school teachers, parents, and students to influence classroom and school policy significantly different from those offered at traditional public schools?	X	X	X	X	X			
Are opportunities (i.e., profession-al growth, salaries, benefits, employee rights) for teachers and other employees significantly different at a charter school than from a traditional public school?	X	X	X	X	X		X	
What happens to students who leave charter schools?	X	X	X	X			X	

We are aware of the fact that charter schools are of considerable public interest and that they are bombarded with requests for information and to serve as subjects for a variety of studies. In addition, we know that they have been targeted by the public media for stories related to an array of topics. While this attention may be complimentary and initially well received, it can become a considerable drain on the resources of the relatively small staffs of charter schools. Usually, those in administrative roles at charter schools are unaccustomed to these requests and do not have the support services to maintain a responsive position.

These conditions posed potential complications for this study; therefore, we made efforts to use existing data that may be required for other reports. We also focused on only those issues that are important and necessary for this study and selected respondents who were considered to be knowledgeable about the issue(s) being addressed and who could contribute to the quality of the information/data that we collected. The planning and coordination of the data collection in the schools were much improved over time, and we hope the process of obtaining information was viewed as time well spent by the participants and useful by stakeholders.

As noted in the matrices, some of the data we collected are quantitative in nature and some are qualitative. Sources of information for answering the key evaluation questions often included a combination of qualitative and quantitative data/information. Likewise, a variety of sources were often used to provide a basis for responding to a question. We often use the term "triangulation" in our data/information-gathering efforts. While this implies three indicators or sources, we often employed more than three sources to provide a more detailed and dependable explanation.

For example, we examined the level of satisfaction with the schools from the vantage point of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. We considered evidence of academic achievement from test scores, as well as self-rated performance by students and parents' opinions about their children. In addition, we asked teachers about other types of achievement that reflected the mission and goals of the school. Input about the role and effectiveness of the local school districts that granted their charter was supplied by charter school representatives, appropriate Pennsylvania Department of Education personnel, and others identified by the authorizers themselves.

2.2 Specific Methods for Data Collection

This section contains brief descriptions of the data collection methods. Further details on these methods are included in the sections that contain the respective results.

Surveys

Four different surveys were used in the course of the study. Charter school surveys developed by The Evaluation Center were administered to teachers/staff, students, and parents/guardians. A school climate survey from the National Association of Secondary School Principals was also used. While the questions in the charter school surveys were targeted to each group (i.e., parents, students, and charter school staff), the same school climate survey was administered to all three stakeholder groups in the charter schools.

All schools were visited during the spring of 2002 for the purpose of administering surveys. We visited each of the 31 schools that opened in either 1997 or 1998 twice prior to 2002. The first round of these visits occurred in May and early June 1999. The second round occurred during March and April 2000. The fieldwork went rather smoothly, and most schools were prepared and eager to work with us. At a few schools, however, the level of cooperation from school representatives was minimal. During these visits, questionnaires were administered to students. Before the site visit, survey packages were prepared and mailed to all instructional staff and key administrators as well as for a random sample of between 25 and 35 parents. During the site visit we picked up the completed staff surveys, from an assigned contact person. The parent surveys were returned to us by mail. Interviews were also conducted; and documentation, where available, was collected about the school.

Below a brief description of the questionnaires and targeted stakeholder groups is included as well as information about the timing of the administration of the questionnaires and the actual data collection process. Appendices A, B, and C contain the survey questions and results.

Teachers/staff charter school survey. All teachers and school personnel who work more than 5 hours per week and who are involved with instruction, including administrative and professional support personnel, were asked to complete this questionnaire. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire, enclose it in an envelope, and then return it to a designated person at the school. Teachers were instructed not to place their names on the questionnaire, although they were asked to check their name off a list so that we could trace and follow up with missing respondents. Since the completed forms were to be collected, sealed, and returned or mailed to the external evaluator by a designated person at each school, ample assurance was given that the responses would be anonymous. A cover letter explained the purpose of the survey, and each teacher received an envelope in which to enclose the survey.

Student charter school survey. This questionnaire was used only with students in grades 5-12. This meant that a few schools that catered only to lower elementary grades were not included. Three classes of students were selected at each school. These questionnaires were administered by a member of the evaluation team, and all of the students in these classes were asked to complete a questionnaire. The purpose of the survey and the manner in which the results would be used were explained to the students before they began completing the forms. After initial instructions, students in grades 7-12 could typically complete the questionnaires on their own. More instructions for individual items were provided to students in Grades 5 and 6.

Parent/guardian charter school survey. Depending on the size of the school, between 25 and 35 families at each school were selected to complete the survey. Families were randomly selected from a roster of all students by a member of the evaluation team. Additional details regarding the sampling can be found on the evaluation Web site (http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/) in the document entitled "Instructions for Administering the Parent/Guardian Survey." A cover letter explained the purpose of the survey, and each parent received a self-addressed, stamped return envelope in which to enclose the survey. School participation on the survey was optional during the first round of data collection (May 1999). This was because of the short space of time available to administer the survey and conduct a thorough follow-up before the end of the school year. During the second and third rounds of data collection, two dollars were enclosed in each envelope going home to selected parents. This served as a means to express our gratitude for the time parents took in completing and returning the survey.

School Climate Survey for teachers/staff, students and parents/guardians. This is a commercial instrument developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The administration of this instrument was coordinated by the external evaluators or by field researchers who worked as part of the evaluation team. One advantage of the School Climate Survey is that national norms are available so that charter schools can see how they rate compared with other public schools across the nation.

The summarized results from each survey were returned to each school for its own planning purposes. Additionally, a short report containing the responses to the open-ended questions were returned to the schools. When returning the results of the second round of surveys, we also provided the schools with a primer to help them understand and interpret the results for their school.

Response rates on surveys . The purpose of our sampling was to build an accurate composite picture of the target population of staff, students, and parents across all charter schools in the state. We pieced together this picture by sampling representative groups of stakeholders at each school. Table 2:3 contains the information on target population, achieved sample, and response rates.

Our strategy in sampling teachers/staff was to receive a high response rate from all teachers/staff in the charter schools. For students, the strategy was to select three representative classes at each school. In many cases this involved sampling 100 percent of all the students at grade 5 or above. In all other cases, the three classes represented a large portion of all enrolled students.

Since one of the key purposes of the charter school reform is parental choice, parents are clearly one of the most important stakeholder groups. Unfortunately, parents are also the most difficult group from which to collect information. Many other studies invest time and effort into sampling all parents, but then invest little effort into follow-up. In order to achieve a representative sample, our strategy was to sample a smaller group of parents at each school and then work hard to obtain a high response rate from this randomly selected group. Either of the two approaches would likely have yielded a similar number of returned surveys, but from our experience we find that the parents who initially respond are either extremely critical or extremely positive about the school. In other words, a small, well-drawn sample is better than a large, poorly drawn sample, since the former is more likely to be representative of the target population. Table 2:3 illustrates the overall sample and response rate by stakeholder group and year.

Table 2:3 Sample Size and Response Rates for Charter School Surveys

	1998-99			1999-00			2001-02		
	Target Pop.	Achieved Sample	Response Rate	Target Pop.	Achieved Sample	Response Rate	Target Pop.	Achieved Sample	Response Rate
Teacher/ Staff	609	447	73.4%	649	536	82.6%	1,990	1,706	85.7%[1]
Student	1,021	923	90.4%	1,221	1,105	90.5%	3,023	2,519	83.3%[2]
Parent/ Guardian	577	292	50.6%	777	364	46.8%	1,949	863	44.3%[3]

While not included in Table 2:3, it should be pointed out that in 1999-00, we also administered a nationally normed school climate survey to the schools. The response rates were 86 percent from teachers/staff, 90 percent for students, and 68 percent for parents.

Interviews and Site Visits

During the site visits when we administered surveys, as well during other site visits, we conducted interviews with the CAOs and other staff members. In some schools we also had the opportunity to meet with parents and community members. As on other occasions, the purpose of the visits was to collect information about innovative or unique aspects of the schools, as well as to inquire about evidence of success according to the school mission statement.

Document Review

The annual reports the charter schools prepared and submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education in August each year were the primary source of documentation regarding the operation and performance of the charter schools. For the 6 oldest schools we obtained 5 annual reports, and for 23 schools we received 4 annual reports. Additionally, we received annual reports from all but a few of the schools that began operation during the 1999-00, 2000-01, and 2001-02 school years.[4]

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[1] Three schools did not complete teacher/surveys despite several attempts to obtain their participation: Family CS, Harambee Institute CS, and Freire CS.

[2] We received student surveys from 62 schools in 2000-01. Eleven schools did not complete student surveys since they did not have students in grades 5 or above. Due to scheduling problems and/or resistance from schools, three schools that had students in grades 5-12 were not sampled: Freire Charter School, Village Charter School of Chester-Upland, and PA Learners Online Regional CS. The response rate for students dropped in the most recent year due to the poor response rates that we received from students enrolled at the cyber schools. Typically, we administer the surveys to the students in person. However, we had to mail student surveys to the cyber school students.

[3] While most schools had response rates on the parent surveys between 40 and 65 percent, 9 schools were dropped from the analysis because they had response rates that were below 20 percent despite repeated attempts to survey the parents. These schools were Chester CS, Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS, Freire CS, Germantown Settlement CS, La Academia: The Partnership CS, Math Civics and Sciences CS, Nueva Esperanza Academy CS, Richard Allen Preparatory CS, and YouthBuild Philadelphia CS.

Wishing to be as unobtrusive as possible, we requested documentation already produced by the schools that would likely contain the information we wished to collect regarding each individual charter school. During site visits, we also asked for descriptive information/evidence about a school's success and its ability to fulfill its mission as well as any innovative or unique aspects of the school in terms of curriculum, instructional methods, or governance/administrative/operational aspects.

Analysis of Data Available from the Pennsylvania Department of Education

From the Pennsylvania Department of Education Web site we were able to download data pertaining to charter schools and their host districts, as well as all other districts across the Commonwealth. By host district, we are referring to the public school district in which the charter school resides. We downloaded databases pertaining to head counts, finance, and PSSA test results. For most of the indicators, we were able to include data for the last five years. The Pennsylvania Department of Education made extraordinary efforts to provide us with data files for 2001-02, which still have not been released to the public. The one area where data was lacking was financial data. Typically, these data are two years old before they are released. PDE did provide general indicators on expenditures for the 2001-02 school year; however, the most recent revenue data was for the 1999-00 school year, which we downloaded from the Standard and Poors' School Evaluation Services Web site.

Since most of our comparisons were made with similar noncharter public schools or with host districts, we extracted the records for the charter schools and their matching host districts. Next we merged the charter school and host district data into the same records for each year. Finally, we merged records for each school and year into the same database. The structure of these databases allowed us to conduct longitudinal analyses of the charter school data relative to the host district.

2.3 Data Analyses and Reporting

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed according to professionally acceptable standards of practice. The survey results were scanned by machine in order to enter the quantitative responses to closed-item questions.

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[4] In 2001-02, the only three schools that did not submit an annual report were PA Learners Online Regional CS, Delaware Valley CS, and Harambee Institute CS

After processing and scanning the surveys, the data were disaggregated and sorted by school. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data (i.e., largely frequencies, means, standard deviations). Templates were developed for reporting the results back to each school. After compiling profiles from the surveys, the results were formatted and printed. All the results were shared with the schools and with PDE .

As the surveys were collected and returned to The Evaluation Center, all of the open-ended responses were typed up and recorded in a separate database with responses linked to school ID, role of stakeholder, and question number. The written comments from teachers/staff, parents, and students were returned to each school. All comments were stripped of identifying information in order to assure the anonymity of the respondents.

As we collected the data, it was organized and integrated into a relational database. Archiving the data in the database facilitated the simultaneous analysis of district-level, school-level, and individual-level data. At the heart of the database are three sets of tables specific for each school. These tables are linked to school-level summaries generated from the student, staff, and parent surveys and to data from PDE's Pennsylvania School Profiles.

Data analyses are summarized in tables with appropriate explanatory narratives. Preliminary copies of formal reports were submitted to the PDE contact for review. The purpose of the optional review of the reports (formally or informally) by PDE-designated persons and any other personnel is to correct errors and omissions and to ensure readability by stakeholders.

In all cases, the Program Evaluation Standards were followed in the conduct and operation of this study.

The collected data yielded information to help us make judgments about individual charter schools, groups of charter schools, and the charter school initiative as a whole. For example, analysis was conducted with the following comparisons in mind:

☐ Compare charter schools over time (for the six original schools for which we had five years of data to consider).

☐ Compare each charter school with its host school district or with schools with similar background characteristics including demographics, size, location, and education level. Comparisons included test scores, demographic information, financial data regarding revenues and expenditures, etc.

☐ Results from the charter school surveys and School Climate Survey were merged with school-based data regarding the demographics, size, location, etc. This allowed comparisons of the degree of satisfaction and quality of school climate with school characteristics.

In recognition of the various stakeholder groups, decision makers, and interested parties, special efforts were made to communicate the procedures, findings, conclusions, and recommendations in understandable formats. In order to provide information to the various stakeholders, a Web site (http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/) was established that contained information about the evaluation as well as copies of the data collection instruments and other fieldwork-related documentation.

2.4 Limitations to the Evaluation

A number of limitations to this study need to be weighed and considered. These are described in the following paragraphs.

Polarization. The most important limitation is perhaps the very polarized nature of the reform and the strong vested interest on the part of many of the stakeholders. Due to this, there is a tendency for information to be painted "black" or "white." For an evaluator, this makes such a study a challenge.

Sampling. Generally, response rates on the surveys were very good when compared with other similar studies. Instead of sending surveys to all respondents and letting them "self-select" into the sample (which creates bias), we randomly selected smaller groups of respondents and then engaged in extensive follow-up to ensure representative samples.[5] In spite of this, response rates at a few schools were unacceptably low and so the school had to be dropped from the analysis. The response rates from parents and guardians were not as high as for the other stakeholder groups. Likewise, response rates on the School Climate Survey were not as good as those for the charter school survey.

Because of the strong vested interests, there is obviously the possibility of misleading information being provided by those we interviewed. Wherever possible, we tried to double-check information. When references were made to financial issues or testing results, we attempted to confirm such information using the databases we obtained from PDE.

Timing. Many of the schools we visited and surveyed were in their first years of operation. Many organizations —not just schools—have problems related to start-up that work themselves out over time. It is possible, therefore, that these schools will require more time to show their true potential.

Comparisons with other schools. Many of the questions addressed in this report require systematic comparisons between charter and noncharter schools. In many instances, administrative data make such comparisons quite easy, as with PSSA scores, demographic data, and enrollments. In other instances, such as innovation, limitations to the project's scope and budget made such comparisons infeasible.

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[5] For the teacher surveys we sought to sample all teachers (a census rather than a sample).

2.5 Challenges Confronting the Evaluation

One challenge confronting any evaluation concerns the overall frame of the evaluation. In some cases, evaluators take the existence of the program for granted and seek to find ways to improve it. This is most closely associated with formative evaluation. In other cases, evaluators seek to assess whether the program should continue at all. Usually, such evaluations assess the extent to which the program realizes some preordained social or policy goal. This is most closely associated with summative evaluation. This evaluation of Pennsylvania charter schools combines elements of both formative and summative evaluation. The first three parts of the report address issues that are more formative in nature, seeking to identify strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the charter school law. The last part —on student outcomes—seeks to assess the extent to which the program is achieving a variety of student outcomes. Thus, the latter chapters provide an assessment of the program's overall desirability, as measured by its ability to achieve its stated goals.

However, there are a number of limitations in our ability to provide summative feedback at this stage. Ultimately, the decision to revoke, continue, or revise Pennsylvania's experiment with charter schools must include the following considerations. First, how much gain in student outcomes (achievement and otherwise) is enough to justify the program's existence? One way to address this question is to estimate the *cost* of a unit improvement in various outcomes relative to the *value* policymakers place on those improved outcomes. Unfortunately, we were unable to generate reliable cost-effectiveness estimates in this study. Clearly, good methods exist for estimating cost-effectiveness and benefit-cost ratios for educational programs (see, e.g., Grissmer et al., 2000). At this point, however, the financial data are insufficient to support reliable estimates. Second, policymakers should consider the opportunity costs of the charter school program. In other words, might the resources expended on charter schools be better spent on other programs designed to pursue the same goals? Estimates of opportunity costs are even trickier than estimates of fiscal costs, since they inevitably involve tough choices about program and value trade-offs.

Another challenge the evaluation team encountered came in assessing the extent to which various charter school practices are innovative. The challenges were part philosophical and part practical in nature. Philosophically, the concept of innovation is highly contested, with little agreement by scholars and others on its definition. We entertain two competing definitions of innovation at the beginning of chapter 9. Nonetheless, our judgments of innovation are clearly sensitive to choice of definition. More practically, given the scope of the project, we found it difficult to provide systematic assessments of the extent to which any given charter school practice was unique relative to its host district schools. Thus, we relied mostly on less rigorous comparisons between charter school practices and those that are "typical" nationwide.

Still another challenge derives from the controversial nature of charter school policy and school choice policies more generally. Indeed, the apparent bipartisan consensus on charter schools masks deeper disagreements about how charter policies should be designed. At the heart of this controversy lie legitimate differences of opinion on important value questions, such as the ultimate goals of education and school policy. As we note in the report, charter school stakeholders hold various positions on the relative importance of equity, efficiency, and choice. Thus, it is often difficult to disentangle factual disagreements about the impact of charter schools from value disagreements about the ultimate goals of charter schools. Where possible, we have tried to identify how our findings might affect the pursuit of these various goals (see Chapters 11 and 12).

A final challenge came in interpreting the empirical findings from the evaluation. As is often the case with new programs, the findings in this report are mixed. Some aspects of Pennsylvania's charter school policy appear to be going well, others not so well. Readers should bear in mind, however, that most of the findings in the text of the report represent aggregate generalizations. Hence, to say that some aspect of the charter school experiment is going poorly does not imply that *all* charter schools are doing poorly on that dimension. Similarly, to say that some aspect of the program is going well does not imply that all charter schools are doing well on that dimension. To account for such variations, we have sought, where possible, to include descriptions of school-to-school variation in the text. In addition, we have included detailed school-level tables on a number of variables. Generally, where the data in question are considered public, we have provided the school-level tables. Where the data are considered nonpublic, or particularly unreliable, we have not provided the school-level tables. We encourage readers to pay close attention to the tables and appendices to gain a full appreciation of the range of charter school experiences in Pennsylvania.

Chapter Three
Description and Background of the Reform in Pennsylvania

The charter school concept is predicated on a bargain—charter schools will receive enhanced autonomy in exchange for being held more accountable for results[1] than other public schools. While this general idea underlies all charter school laws, each state has operationalized the concept in different ways (Millot, 1996; Bulkley, 1999; Hassel, 1999). In this chapter we provide a brief overview of Pennsylvania's charter school law and how it compares with others. We also summarize some changes to the law and regulations since the appearance of our last report in October 2001. Finally, we provide an overview of the growth in the types of charter schools in the Commonwealth.

3.1 An Overview of Pennsylvania's Charter School Law

Pennsylvania's charter school law, while certainly not as strong as some, is among the stronger laws in the country. Indeed, the Center for Education Reform (CER) maintains a ranking system, in which "strong" laws are those that are, in its judgment, most pro-charter school. On this ranking system, Pennsylvania's law receives a grade of "B," placing it in the same category as states such as North Carolina, Colorado, New Jersey, and Wisconsin. States receiving the highest ranking (a grade of "A") on the CER system include Arizona, Michigan, and Minnesota. States receiving the lowest ranking (a grade of "D" or "F") include Rhode Island, Arkansas, and Virginia.

In this section we briefly outline the Pennsylvania law's major components, drawing comparisons with other laws along the way. Our discussion of the law focuses on five issues: charter approval, waivers, staffing and organization, accountability, and admissions. This brief discussion is necessarily incomplete, and we discuss other aspects of legal structure as they arise throughout the report. These comparisons are valuable because they provide insights into areas that may be of interest as legislators consider the future course of charter schools in Pennsylvania. We discuss key issues for policymakers in Chapter 14.

Charter approval process. Act 22 is relatively permissive about the types of individuals and organizations that may apply for charters. Indeed, charter applicants may include individuals, teachers, parents and guardians, nonsectarian colleges and universities, museums, not-for-profit corporations, associations, or any combination of these. However, the statute does not allow sectarian and for-profit organizations and individuals to apply for and receive charters. Arizona's statute, by contrast, allow for-profits to apply for charters. While for-profits in Pennsylvania may not apply for charters, the State Charter School Appeal Board (CAB)—created to hear appeals of denied charter applicants—has ruled that charter schools may contract with for-profit companies for a wide range of services, "as long as the trustees of the charter school maintain ultimate control of the charter school."[7]

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[1] See Miron and Nelson (2002) for an extended discussion of the charter school concept.

Act 22 places more restrictions on who can grant charters than many other state by allowing only school districts to grant them. Applicants denied by local school boards, however, may appeal their cases to the Commonwealth's Charter Appeal Board. Many other states (e.g., Minnesota, Michigan), by contrast, allow state agencies, universities, and other public bodies to grant charters. One fairly unique feature of Pennsylvania's charter law, however, is the concept of "regional charters": charters granted by more than one school district.

In short, the founding of a charter school under Act 22 is the result of negotiations between a charter applicant and a local education authority (LEA)—subject to review by the CAB. The statute, however, does not require that LEAs approve charters unless directed to do so by the CAB on appeal. Instead, the law provides some general guidelines by which LEAs are to evaluate charter applicants:

- a demonstration of community support
- proof that the school is capable of providing a "comprehensive learning experience" to its students
- evidence that the proposed charter school has the potential to serve as a model for other schools

Interestingly, Act 22 provides no clear guidance about how districts should weigh these three criteria. An unanswered question is, could strengths in one category partially offset weaknesses in another?

Unlike many charter school laws, Act 22 does not place restrictions on the origins of charter schools. In addition to creating new, "start-up" schools, both existing public and private schools may apply for charters. States with less permissive laws (e.g., Mississippi) restrict charters to public conversions only. Public school conversions in Pennsylvania, however, must present a petition with the signatures of 50 percent of parents and 50 percent of teaching staff in order to be eligible for a charter. Further, Pennsylvania does not place restrictions on the total number of charter schools, as do some states such as Michigan and Illinois.

The length of a charter helps to define how much autonomy a charter school will have and, conversely, the extent to which it is answerable to the chartering agency. Other things being equal, longer charters provide more flexibility and room to plan. Act 22 allows charters to run from three to five years. Upon the end of this term, chartering agencies may renew charter schools for additional periods of five years each. It is not clear from the language of the statute whether this means that chartering agencies may renew charters for up to five years, or whether all renewals must be for exactly five years. Act 88 of 2002 specifies that cyber charter schools may be renewed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for a period of five years.

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[7] *Collegium Charter School*, Docket No. CAB 1999-9 at 15. aff'd 760 A.2d 452, 468 (Pa. Commw. 2000).

Waivers. Once set up, charter schools are designed to operate with greater autonomy than other public schools. A typical example of the autonomy granted to charter schools is waivers from certain laws pertaining to other public schools. Pennsylvania charter schools gain automatic waivers from many state education laws, except for a number of laws that apply directly to charter schools. This distinguishes Pennsylvania from states such as New Jersey, Utah, and Alaska, where charter schools must apply for specific exemptions in their charters. In other states (e.g., Arkansas and Virginia) charters are subject to most of the public school code.

Staffing and organizational structure . Another source of autonomy comes in matters of internal organization. Act 22 contains at least two provisions designed to ensure charter school autonomy over staffing issues. First, the statute stipulates that charter schools act as their own employer. Other laws (e.g., Kansas) require that the host district employ charter school staff. Second, Act 22 does not require charter schools to abide by district collective bargaining agreements. The Act does, however, allow employees of a given charter to bargain collectively at the building level. The CAB has affirmed charter schools' autonomy over staffing decisions. The Board wrote in the Environmental Charter School appeal that

> There is simply no basis to conclude that the Legislature intended that a school board deny an application if the Board disagreed with the expertise of the charter school's proposed teachers. The purpose of the Charter School Law is to allow the charter school to operate independently of the School Board's judgment in these matters.[3]

At least 75 percent of charter school professional staff, however, must hold "appropriate state certification." In 1999 PDE issued a policy statement permitting the assignment, within curriculum clusters, of certificated persons possessing "the qualifications consistent with achieving the educational objectives of the school" (PDE, 1999). Under PDE's policy a teacher qualifies as certified against the 75 percent standard if (1) the teacher holds an appropriate Pennsylvania public school certification for teaching a subject within one of the following specific curriculum clusters and (2) the teacher teaches one or more subjects within that cluster. The clusters include these:

- ☐ Elementary subjects (including special education)
- ☐ Language Arts/Social Studies/Humanities
- ☐ Secondary Math/Science

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[3] *Environmental Charter School,* Docket No. CAB 1999-14 at 18.

☐ Secondary Vocational/Industrial Arts

Charter school staff are also eligible for emergency certification, and CAOs may hire uncertified substitutes on a limited basis. In 2002, with the passage of Act 88, the General Assembly allows charter schools to hire a CEO who will not be included in any calculation of the school's percentage of certified staff. This essentially allows charter schools to hire an uncertified administrator without lowering its certified staff percentage.

Granting schools discretion over hiring and firing, however, might be of limited use if they cannot recruit good staff. Act 22 contains two provisions designed to attract high quality staff to charter schools. First, district teachers may take up to five years' leave of absence to work in a charter school. Upon return to the district they are entitled to a comparable position and retain tenure rights. Untenured teachers who leave to teach at a charter school may be able to accrue credit toward tenure at the district's discretion. Many other states offer no such protections, while others direct districts only to give "preference" to returning teachers without offering guarantees. Second, charter school staff are enrolled in the state's pension program unless the district has another such program, in which case the staff are enrolled in that program. In some states enrollment in the state pension plan is optional, while in other states it is available only to certified teachers.

Beyond these staffing issues, Act 22 is relatively silent on charter school organization. The statute provides for charter school boards of trustees, but prohibits members of chartering districts from sitting on these boards. Beyond these minimal requirements, the primary source of restrictions on charter governance comes in the charter application and approval process, since charter applicants must include information on proposed governance structures in their charter applications.

Accountability. Charter school autonomy, however, does not come as a blank check, since there are a number of mechanisms by which the schools may be held accountable for their performance. First, contractual or performance accountability requires that the school live up to the terms of the charter it negotiated with its sponsor(s). Act 22 stipulates that

> "A charter school shall be accountable to the parents, the public and the Commonwealth, with the delineation of that accountability reflected in the charter" (1715-A).

This, of course, assumes that the charter documents clear and measurable goals against which charter schools can be held to account, an issue we will address in chapter 11. Contractual accountability comes both when the charter is initially written and when it is time for the sponsor to decide whether to renew the charter. In particular, host districts may choose not to renew a charter if the charter school has

☐ violated the terms of its charter

☐ failed to meet student performance requirements set out in the Pennsylvania Code or in concomitant regulations

- ☐ failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management and audit
- ☐ violated any provisions of Act 22
- ☐ violated any other laws from which charters are not exempted (see above)
- ☐ been convicted of fraud

Moreover, districts may immediately revoke a charter "[I]n cases where the health or safety of the school's pupils, staff or both is at serious risk" [24 P.S. §1729-A(C)]. However, the statute is largely silent on the question of how districts, stakeholders, and evaluators should balance these multiple criteria.

Second, charter schools are subject to market accountability, according to which consumers "vote with their feet" for or against the schools. Like other charter school laws, Act 22's provisions on charter finance illustrate the principle of market accountability, as funding follows students. Thus, should a school fail to attract and retain students, it might soon run out of funds.

Finally, Pennsylvania charter schools are subject to a number of regulatory requirements, in spite of the waivers discussed above. Such regulatory accountability includes compliance audits (see Chapter 11).

Admissions. As public schools, charter schools are for the most part required to accept any Pennsylvania student. In other words, students may select charter schools but charter schools may not select their students. Charter schools, for instance, may not discriminate on the basis of intellectual ability, athletic ability, disability, limited English proficiency, or "other illegal bases" (sic). And in cases where more students apply to a charter school than there are spaces in that school, the school must select students at random from a pool of "qualified applicants" who have submitted "timely applications." However, charter schools must by law give preference to residents of their host district(s).

Charters schools do, however, retain some discretion over admissions. For instance, they can (though need not) give preference to siblings of current students or to children of parents who have "actively participated" in the development of the charter school. Moreover, unlike some charter school laws (e.g., Minnesota's), Act 22 provides no requirements for ethnic or racial balance, except that no district may approve a charter that would place it in violation of a judicial desegregation order. In general, charters may develop any other "reasonable" criteria for evaluating prospective students. For instance, a June 1999 amendment to the law makes it clear that the prohibition on intellectual ability criteria does not preclude schools from selecting on grade level, area of academic concentration, or at-risk status.

3.2 Changes in Charter School Law and Regulations

Since our October 2001 interim report, the General Assembly made several changes to the charter school law by enacting Act 88 in 2002. Most of the changes concerned cyber charter schools. A few others concerned all charters.

Act 88 of 2002 addresses all issues regarding cyber charter schools. The law gives PDE the sole authority to grant charters to cyber charter schools. Existing cyber charter schools will look to PDE for renewal of their charters at the expiration of their existing charter agreements.

The original charter school law contained general provisions authorizing all types of charter schools, but did not contain a special provision defining a cyber charter school. Act 88, however, defines a cyber charter school as "an independent public school established and operated under a charter from the Department of Education and in which the school uses technology in order to provide a significant portion of its curriculum and to deliver a significant portion of instruction to its students through the Internet or other electronic means" (Section 1703-A).

PDE is authorized to revoke a cyber charter if a material component of the students' education is not being provided or the cyber charter has failed to maintain the financial ability to provide services. The department is required to annually (1) assess whether each cyber charter school is meeting its goals and is in compliance with its charter and (2) review each cyber charter school's performance on the PSSA, standardized tests, and other performance indicators.

Another issue that has received much attention is billing disputes between charter schools (especially cyber charter schools) and the schools' sending districts. Act 88 specifies a review process for these disputes.

Act 88 prohibits cyber charter schools from

- ☐ providing discounts to a school district or waiving payments for students
- ☐ providing payments to parents or guardians for the purchase of instructional materials
- ☐ entering into agreements to provide funds to a school entity, except as compensation for the provision of specific services

This last prohibition outlaws financial arrangements whereby charter schools agree to pay their chartering district a certain amount per student from outside the district enrolled in the cyber charter school.

Cyber charter schools are also required to make certain information available, upon request, to PDE, any district sending students to the school, and any potential student's parent. They are required to provide each enrolled student all instructional materials and equipment including, but not limited to, a computer, computer monitor, and printer. Cyber charter schools must provide for or reimburse all technology and services necessary for the online delivery of the curriculum and instruction.

One key issue addressed in Act 88 that affects all charter schools, rather than only cyber charter schools, is that it allows schools to establish an alternative administrative position to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The new position is for Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Act 88 defines a charter school CEO as "an individual appointed by the board of trustees to oversee and manage the operation of the charter school" (Section 1703-A). This change allows charter schools to hire a CEO and not include that person in their percentage of professional staff that needs to be certified.

Regulatory changes regarding special education adopted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in 2001 include the following.

Special education regulations. After the passage of Act 22, PDE provided preliminary guidelines to charter schools and issued numerous "Basic Education Circulars." The department issued its original preliminary guidance document (PDE, 1997) in an effort to provide charter schools with ongoing guidance in all areas of operation including special education.

In a move to provide more specific guidance to charter schools regarding compliance with special education laws, PDE published proposed charter school regulations for review on July 8, 2000 (PDE, 2000a). These regulations proposed adding a new chapter (Chapter 711, "Charter School Services and Programs for Children with Disabilities") to Title 22 Pa. Code. After receiving public comment and making minor changes, PDE adopted these rules in March 2001. The rules attempt to provide much needed clarification of special education rules and regulations for charter schools. The rules cover four broad areas of special education: (1) general provision and supervision, (2) identification and evaluation, (3) individual education programs (IEPs), and (4) procedural safeguards.

Within these four areas, several specific tenets that the preliminary guidance document indicated as "needing much additional study" are clarified, indicating substantial review by the state regulators. For example, whereas Act 22 allows charter schools considerable flexibility in the area of teacher certification, the new rules state that persons providing special education or related services must have appropriate certification. Another example involves identification and evaluation of students with disabilities. The preliminary guidelines (PDE, 1997) suggested that school districts, not charter schools, were responsible for identifying, locating, and evaluating students with disabilities under IDEA's "Child Find" mandate. The Chapter 711 rules state, "To enable the Commonwealth to meet its obligations under 34 CFR 300.125 (relating to Child Find), each charter school shall establish written policies and procedures to ensure that all children with disabilities that are enrolled in the charter school, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located and evaluated" (PDE, 2000b, p. 3465).

The rules also stipulate that charter schools must have written policies that (1) outline how parents will be notified of special education services and programs and (2) provide for systematic screening to identify the disabilities present in children enrolled in the schools. These rules do not require charter schools to establish outreach identification programs to the general community. They do, however, go much further than the original guidance document in specifically requiring charter schools to provide Child Find activities to serve enrolled families. The regulations also provide extensive direction regarding charter schools' responsibilities to consider Extended School Year (ESY) services to qualified students. This IDEA requirement, which was not addressed in the preliminary guidance document, normally pertains to students with significant cognitive impairments but cannot be limited to students with these types of impairments. Finally, the regulations address the procedural safeguards that must be followed in the case of suspension or expulsion of a student with disabilities (an area of particular concern to schools with students displaying extreme behavior problems) and procedures required for due process hearings, recordkeeping requirements, and enrollment policies. A review of the regulations seems to indicate PDE's growing recognition that the Commonwealth's regulatory structures leave little room for deregulation. This is because existing regulations do not go far beyond the regulatory "floor" defined by IDEA.

The development of these rules demonstrates PDE's efforts at clarifying charter schools' responsibilities to students with disabilities and providing a better framework for evaluating charter school special education compliance. More work may still be needed since enrollments of students with special needs in charter schools are still considerably lower than in noncharter public schools and because there are still objections by disability advocates.[4]

3.3 Growth Trends

As of the 2002-03 academic year, 90 charter schools have been created under Pennsylvania's charter school law. This is up slightly from the 77 charter schools that started the 2001-02 year and up considerably from 6 during the law's first full year of implementation in 1997-98. Over the last 5 years, 2 charter schools, Creative Educational Concepts and Thurgood Marshall Academy, have closed. The growth in the number of schools is illustrated in Figure 3:1.

Figure 3:1 also shows growth in overall charter school enrollments across the state. Enrollment during the 2001-02 academic year was 28,576, up from just under 20,000 the previous year and up from 1,143 during the first full year of the law's implementation in 1997-98.

While the overall number of charter schools has increased from year to year, Figure 3:1 provides evidence that the rate at which new schools have been added

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[4] The Education Law Center's (2001) Pittsburgh Director, Nancy Hubley, expressed concerns about four provisions of the final regulations in a letter to Attorney General Mike Fisher in February 2001 (see http://www.psrn.org/Letter_to_AG_2-21.html). The letter stated that the final regulations were "an improvement over earlier drafts, but still contain specific provisions that violate the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"), 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq. and applicable case law." The letter cites the group's specific concerns about four provisions:

- ☐ § 711.61–Suspension and Expulsion affords expelled students less than the "free appropriate public education" guaranteed by the IDEA.
- ☐ § 711.44–Extended School Year (ESY) fails to meet the minimum federal standard set forth in IDEA and applicable case law.
- ☐ § 711.42–Transportation fails to state that either the charter school or the district of residence is responsible for providing appropriate transportation for a child with a disability when needed as a related service.
- ☐ § 711.3–Incorporation of Federal Regulations omits two key federal regulations that should have been incorporated by reference.

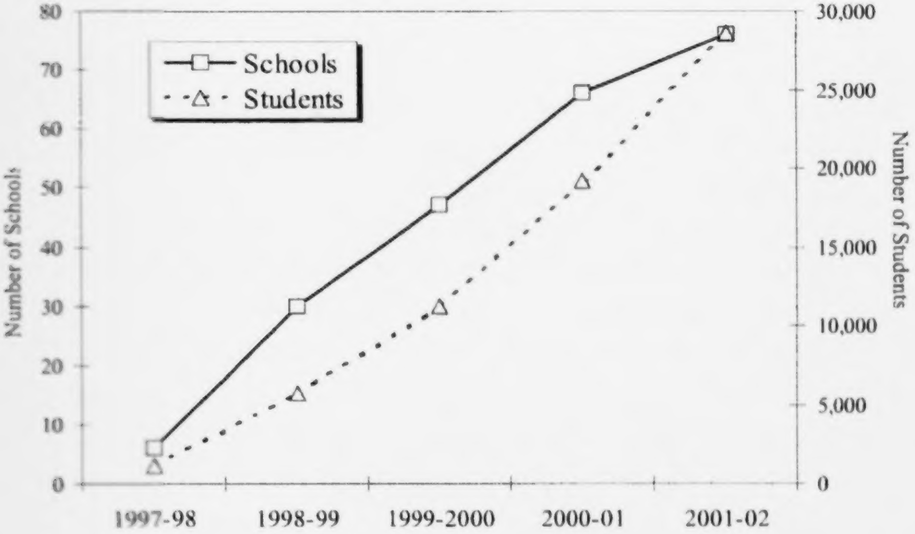


Figure 3:1 Growth in the Number of Schools and Students in Pennsylvania Charter Schools

has slowed in recent years. However, it appears that this slowing has not affected growth in overall enrollments. In large part, this combination of slowing growth in the number of schools and continued rates of growth in overall enrollments is explained by the fact that the size of the typical Pennsylvania charter school has grown over time. We return to the issue of charter school size in Chapter 5.

In spite of the aforementioned growth in the movement, charter school enrollment remains a relatively small proportion of total public school enrollment in the Commonwealth. During the 2001-02 academic year charter school enrollments comprised 1.6 percent of total public school enrollment. This, however, is up from just 0.3 percent for the 1998-99 academic year.

3.4 Charter School Location

One of the most significant items that parents must weigh when deciding whether to enroll their child(ren) in a charter school is location. Indeed, 21 percent of the parents reported that they live a mile or less from the charter schools and only 24 percent reported that they lived more than 10 miles away. However, findings from our Spring 2002 parent surveys indicated that most charter school parents indicated that school location was relatively unimportant in their decision to choose a charter school. Since the surveys were administered only to those already in charter schools, they provide no way of determining whether location deters others from attending. While surveying noncharter school parents was well beyond the project's scope and budget, we can draw some inferences by examining maps of charter school locations included later in this section.

Charter schools are concentrated in certain parts of the Commonwealth, particularly Philadelphia. Indeed, while Philadelphia enrolls approximately 11 percent of the public school students in the state, it has 50 percent of the charter schools and 54 percent of the charter school students. Another charter school, located just outside Philadelphia, serves many students from the city. Within Philadelphia, the charter schools are fairly dispersed, although, there is a concentration of schools in the Center City area (see maps in Figures 3:4 and 3:5).

The four counties surrounding Philadelphia—Delaware (3), Chester (7), Bucks (4) and Montgomery (2)—are home to 16 charter schools. As a whole, 61 of the 90 Pennsylvania charter schools are located in these 5 southeastern Pennsylvania counties.

The Commonwealth's second largest city, Pittsburgh, hosts six charter schools. The remaining charter schools are scattered throughout Pennsylvania. Centre County is the only other county with three or more (see Pennsylvania Charter Schools maps).

To assess the spatial distribution of Pennsylvania charter schools, we plotted the locales of the schools and coded them by color signifying their first year of operation (see Figure 3:2). The first year established a pattern that has continued to this day, with most charter schools in Philadelphia and fewer in other regions of the Commonwealth. Indeed, with the exception of Keystone Education Center in Mercer County, each of the first crop of charter schools was either in Philadelphia or the surrounding communities (Chester County Family Academy is located in the West Chester school district, just to the west of Philadelphia). The 1999-00 school year once again evidenced more extensive growth in the Philadelphia School District, with 12 new schools in Philadelphia and only 5 elsewhere.

After charter schools were approved to open during the 1999-2000 school year, a number of stakeholders (including program officers of Western Pennsylvania foundations) were concerned that while charter schools were flourishing in Philadelphia, the movement was languishing in the rest of the state. The rate of growth in the remainder of the state appears to be catching up with the opening of the 2000-01 round of charter schools. Nine schools opened in Philadelphia during 2000-01 and 10 elsewhere. In 2002-02, 5 charter schools opened in Philadelphia and 6 in the rest of the state. For 2002-03, 6 of the 14 new charter schools are in Philadelphia.

While Figure 3:2 illustrates the location of charter schools by year, Figure 3:3 illustrates the relative size of the charter schools. Figures 3:4 and 3:5 narrow in on only the Southeast corner of the Commonwealth and illustrate the growth of charter schools in and around Philadelphia.

Figure 3:2
Pennsylvania Charter Schools
by Year Opened

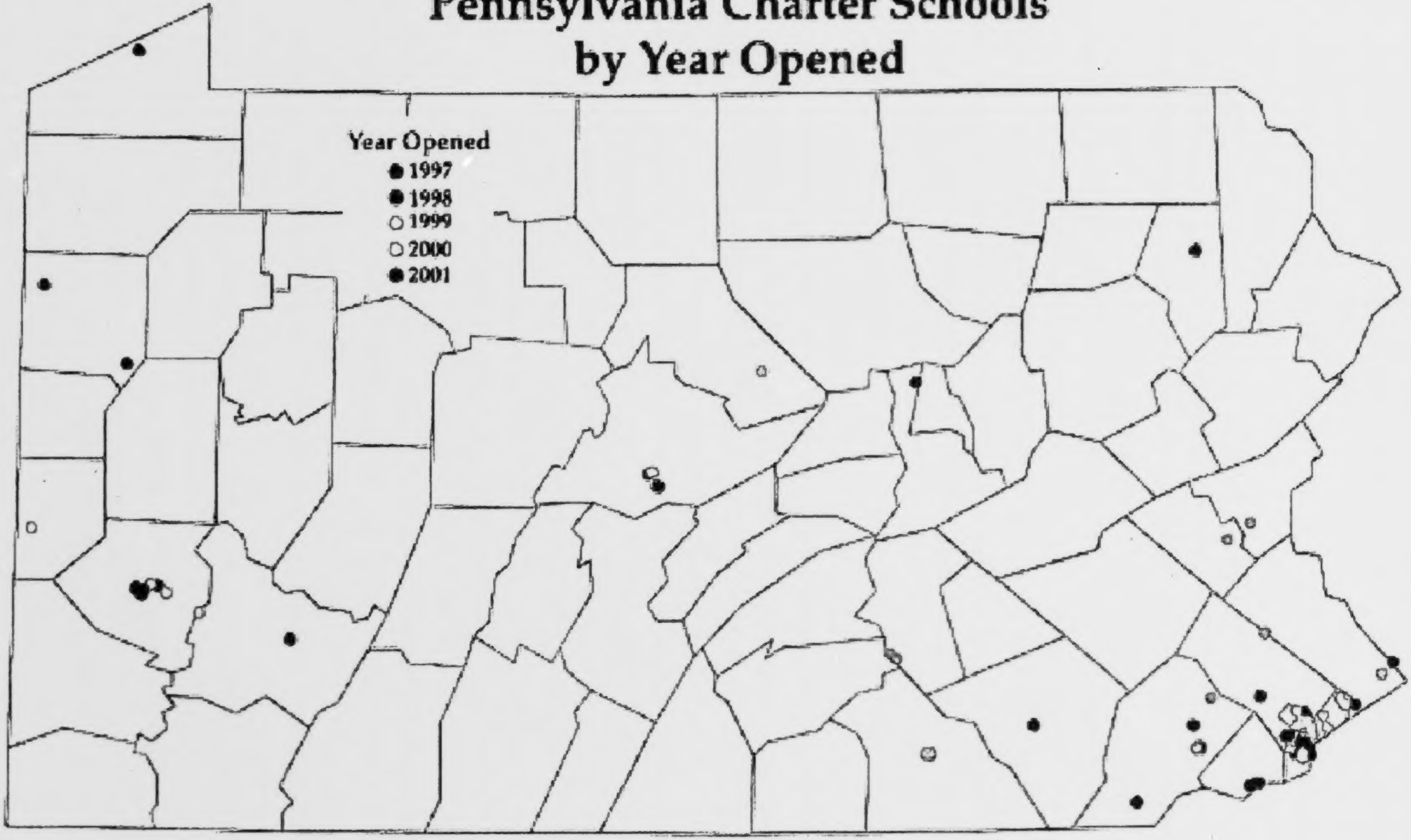
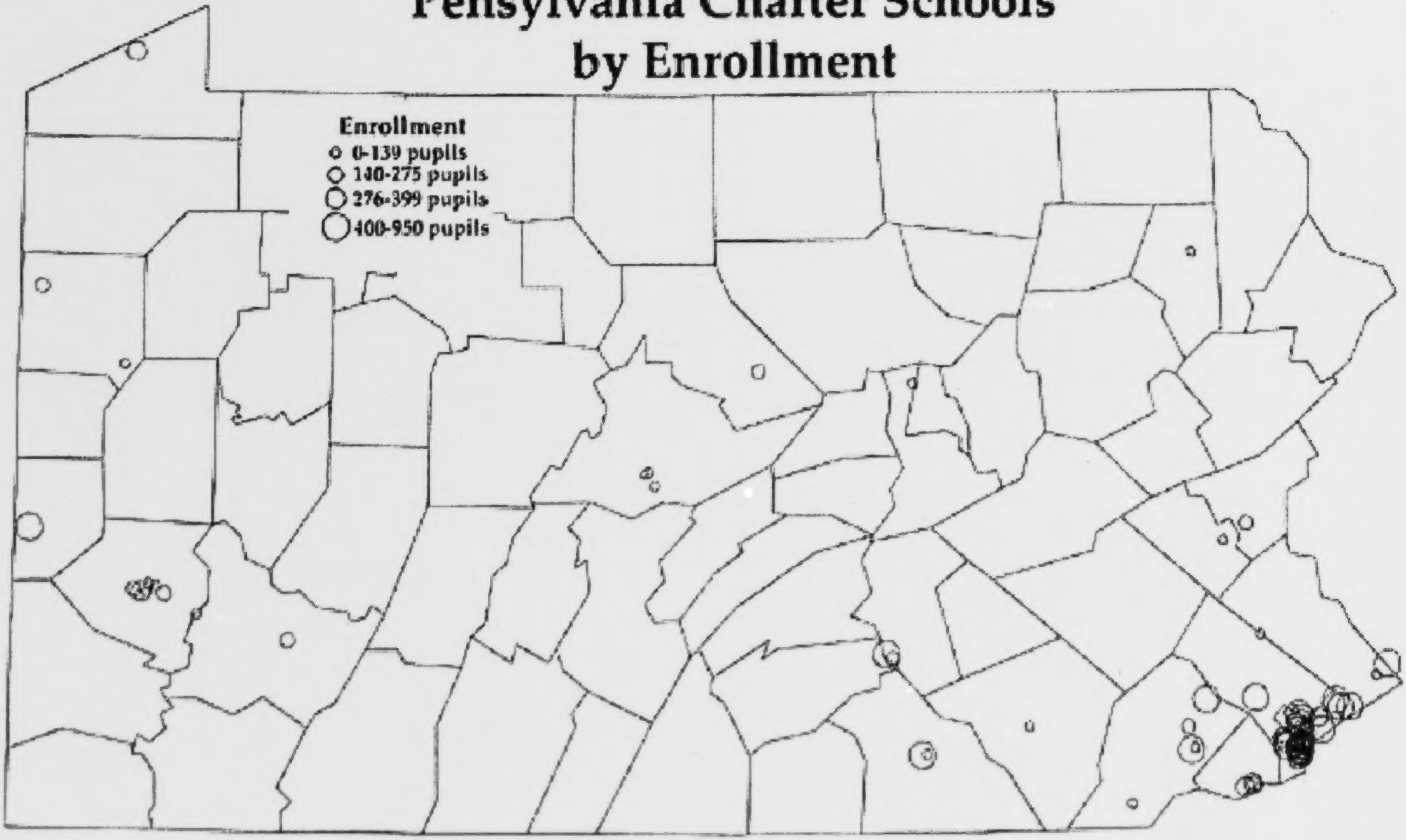


Figure 3:3

Pensylvania Charter Schools by Enrollment



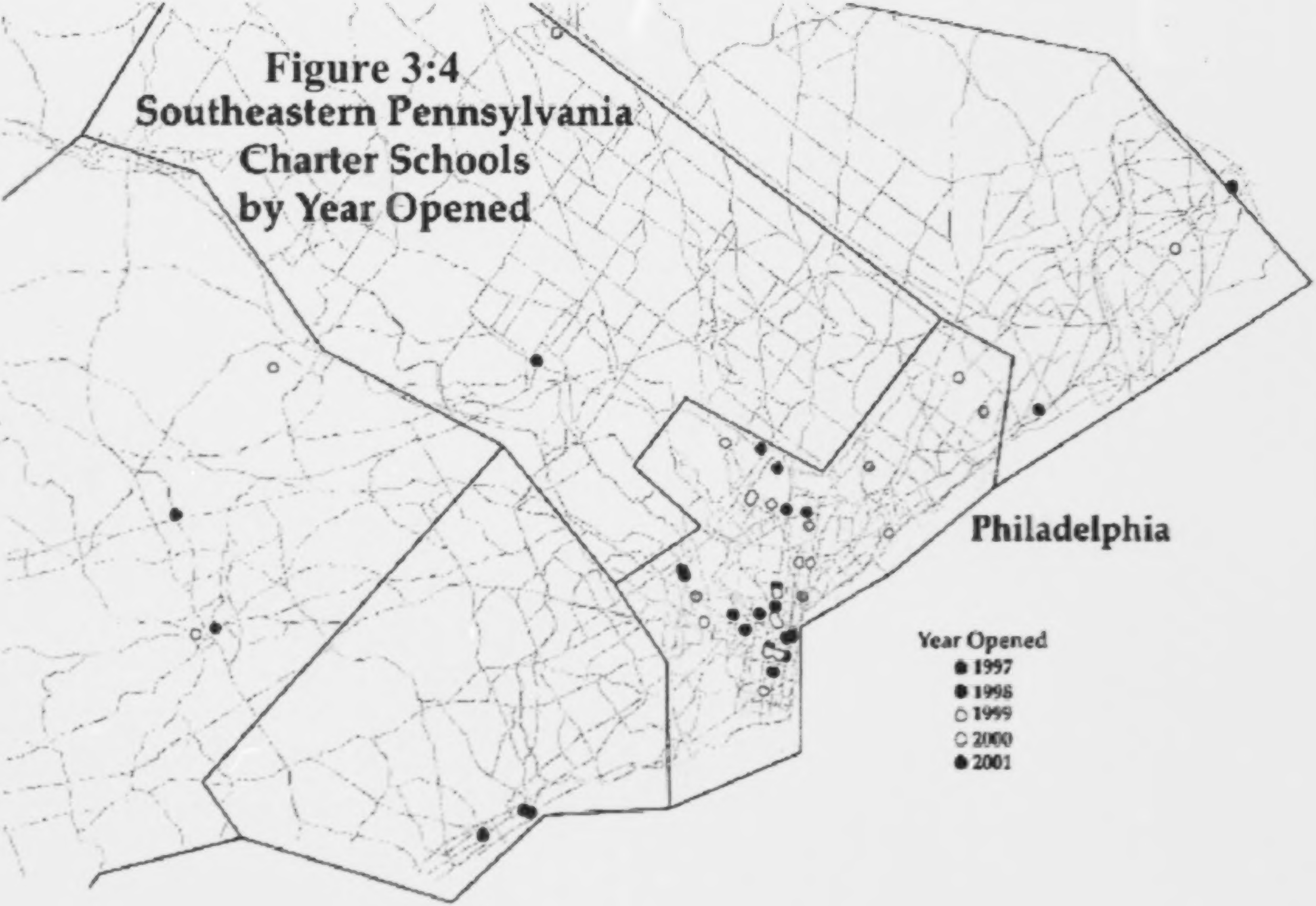


Figure 3:4
Southeastern Pennsylvania
Charter Schools
by Year Opened

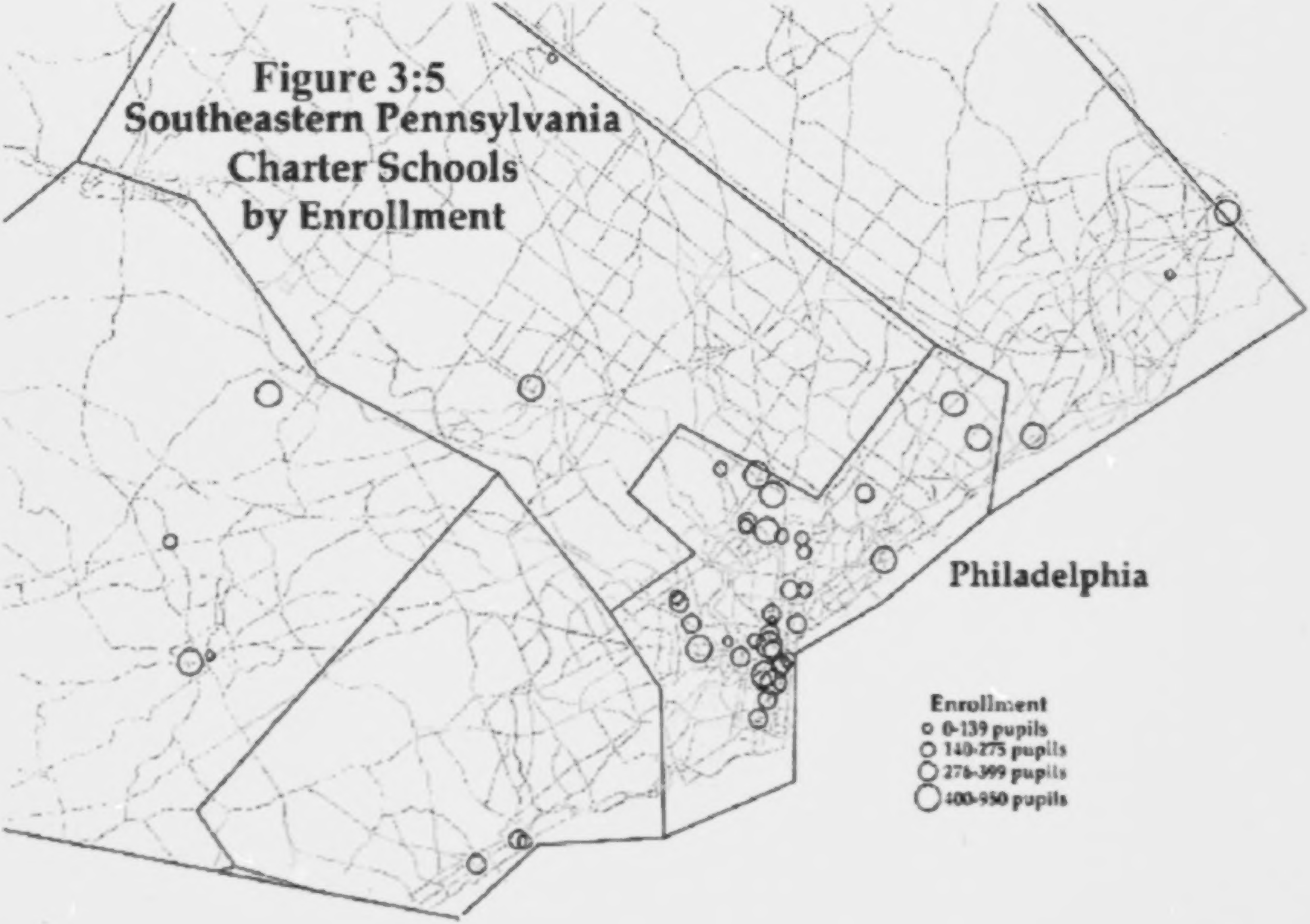


Figure 3:5
Southeastern Pennsylvania
Charter Schools
by Enrollment

Another way to examine the distribution of charter schools is to consider charter school enrollment as a proportion of total public school enrollment in various parts of the Commonwealth. To do this, we simply divided charter enrollment in each county by total public school enrollment. The results confirm the findings from the maps, while offering a degree of quantitative precision.

As Table 3:1 shows, most counties still have no charter school enrollment. Ten counties have charter school enrollments that exceed 1 percent of total public school enrollment. These figures, however, do not represent students who enroll in cyber charter schools. Cyber charter school students are counted in the county in which the cyber charter school is located, not the county where the student resides. In Montgomery County, for example, more than 700 of the 829 students counted as the county's charter school enrollment attend PA Virtual. The large majority of these students reside outside Montgomery County. A similar circumstance can be seen in Bucks County with Einstein Academy and in Beaver County with Western PA Cyber. In order to illustrate the extensive scope of counties that have students enrolled in cyber schools, we have mapped out a sample of 20-35 families for each cyber school in Figure 3:6. Figure 3:7 maps out the complete enrollment for one cyber at midpoint in the 2001-02 school year.

Philadelphia County has the highest charter school enrollment at 7.9 percent. This may actually underestimate the number of students who reside in Philadelphia and attend charter schools. A large number of Philadelphia residents attend School Lane Charter School in Bucks County just north of the city. Also, cyber charter students residing in Philadelphia are counted in other counties because no cyber charter schools are located in Philadelphia. Our intent is not to belabor the obvious point (made in Chapter 2) that charter schools remain a small force in Pennsylvania, but to illustrate that they are concentrated in only a few geographic regions.

Concentration of Charter Schools in Philadelphia

Many observers have noted the high concentration of charter schools in Philadelphia. Indeed, of the 90 charter schools opened as of Fall 2002, 45 (50 percent) were in Philadelphia. Moreover, as of 2001-02, 57 percent of charter school students attended Philadelphia charter schools. By comparison, Philadelphia enrolls only 11 percent of all public school students in Pennsylvania. In this section we attempt to offer some preliminary explanations for this concentration. One possible explanation is that there is something inherent in Act 22 that favors Philadelphia charter schools. We found no evidence of this, a conclusion confirmed by a member of the legislative committee that worked on Act 22.[5]

Another possible explanation is that Philadelphia possesses many of the resources and factors that, based on the literature and observation, would seem conducive to the development of charter schools. For example, the Philadelphia

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[5] Personal correspondence with Ron Cowell, former chair of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Committee on Education, May 11, 2000.

Table 3.1 Charter School Enrollments as Percent of Total Public School Enrollment by County 2001-02

County	Total Enroll-ment	Charter School Enroll-ment	CS as % of Total	County	Total Enroll-ment	Charter School Enroll-ment	CS as % of Total
Adams	14652	0	0.0%	Lackawanna	27322	59	0.2%
Allegheny	170767	1273	0.7%	Lancaster	69032	90	0.1%
Armstrong	11066	0	0.0%	Lawrence	14912	0	0.0%
Beaver	27243	1146	4.2%	Lebanon	17975	0	0.0%
Bedford	8118	0	0.0%	Lehigh	45938	216	0.5%
Berks	66125	0	0.0%	Luzerne	39828	0	0.0%
Blair	19458	0	0.0%	Lycoming	18808	0	0.0%
Bradford	11286	0	0.0%	McKean	7582	0	0.0%
Bucks	89165	3377	3.8%	Mercer	18832	296	1.6%
Butler	27722	0	0.0%	Mifflin	6206	0	0.0%
Cambria	19471	0	0.0%	Monroe	29363	0	0.0%
Cameron	1094	0	0.0%	Montgomery	102040	829	0.8%
Carbon	8374	0	0.0%	Montour	2781	0	0.0%
Centre	14236	328	2.3%	Northampton	42351	0	0.0%
Chester	64023	1595	2.5%	Northumberland	13678	81	0.6%
Clarion	7483	0	0.0%	Perry	7397	0	0.0%
Clearfield	15256	0	0.0%	Philadelphia	197083	15508	7.9%
Clinton	4901	214	4.4%	Pike	5051	0	0.0%
Columbia	10565	0	0.0%	Potter	3251	0	0.0%
Crawford	11556	0	0.0%	Schuylkill	19750	0	0.0%
Cumberland	28458	0	0.0%	Snyder	5531	0	0.0%
Dauphin	36489	654	1.8%	Somerset	12068	0	0.0%
Delaware	70552	1620	2.3%	Sullivan	880	0	0.0%
Elk	4446	0	0.0%	Susquehanna	8248	0	0.0%
Erie	41805	310	0.7%	Tioga	6774	0	0.0%
Fayette	20390	0	0.0%	Union	4428	0	0.0%
Forest	730	0	0.0%	Venango	10269	0	0.0%
Franklin	17899	0	0.0%	Warren	6457	0	0.0%
Fulton	2444	0	0.0%	Washington	35468	0	0.0%
Greene	6348	0	0.0%	Wayne	9561	0	0.0%
Huntingdon	6368	0	0.0%	Westmoreland	55795	194	0.3%
Indiana	12139	0	0.0%	Wyoming	4758	0	0.0%
Jefferson	6136	0	0.0%	York	67221	786	1.2%
Juniata	3321	0	0.0%				

school district has a large "supply" of potential charter school students. Indeed, whereas the median Pennsylvania school district enrolls 2,045 students, as of 2001 the Philadelphia public schools enrolled 197,083. Philadelphia also possesses an abundance of catalysts for change, such as community organizations and activists who want to create new options and alternatives for the community's children. As of the 2000-01 school year 72 percent of Philadelphia students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, compared with a median of 31 percent statewide. Because of these background characteristics, it is not surprising that Philadelphia students also tend to do relatively poorly on the PSSA. Indeed, the combined district average PSSA score for the 2001-02 school year was 1160, compared with an average of 1310 statewide (taking all grade levels and subject areas into account). In addition to demographic factors, there is evidence that Philadelphia also has many social capital resources in its relatively dense network of nonprofit community, church, and ethnic associations. These resources can provide catalysts for change.

3.5 Role of Education Management Organizations and Nonprofit Community-Based Organizations

Charter schools often are founded or operated with the assistance of either a private education management organization or a nonprofit, community-based organization. These organizations aid charter schools with start-up funding, facilities, and personnel/administrative support.

Education management organizations. One of the more controversial emerging issues in charters schools—and public education generally—is the use of private education management organizations (EMOs). Proponents of contracting out to EMOs argue that competition, the profit motive, and freedom from what they view as cumbersome governmental bureaucracies allow private management companies to provide more value for the money. Critics argue, by contrast, that such companies threaten to diminish the local and democratic character of charter schools. Recent years have seen the growth of a number of such companies, ranging from national, full service organizations such as Edison, Mosaica, Nobel, and Advantage, to any number of small "mom and pop" outfits. In Michigan, for instance, nearly three-quarters of all charter schools contract out all or part of their services to private for-profit management companies (Miron & Nelson, 2002).

In contrast to Michigan and other states, private management companies have played a relatively small role in Pennsylvania charter schools thus far. Currently, 14.5 percent of the charter schools are operated by for-profit EMOs. Table 3:2 illustrates the pattern of growth of EMOs in the Pennsylvania charter school reform.

Table 3:2 Involvement of EMOs in Pennsylvania Charter Schools by Year

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Number of EMOs	0	2	5	11	12	13
Number of Schools	6	30	47	66	77	90

The role of private management companies has generally increased over time in Pennsylvania. As of the 1999-00 school year, 5 charter schools were managed by 4 different management companies and enrolled a total of approximately 1,800 students. During the 2000-01 school year, 11 schools were run by 6 management companies. Aside from the small company operating the Chester Community Charter School, the remainder were operated by large national EMOs, including 4 schools run by Mosaica Education Inc, 2 schools run by Edison Schools Inc. (1 of these being the state's first public school conversion), 2 schools operated by

Nobel Learning Communities Inc., 1 school run by Advantage Schools Inc., and 1 school run by LearnNow.[6] Two of the 14 new charter schools that opened in 2002-03 are managed by Mosaica. The number of EMO-run schools would be higher if the companies could have retained all of their contracts; however, 3 schools have terminated their contracts, 2 with Mosaica, and 1 with Tutorbots.

Nonprofit community-based organizations. Just as private EMOs aid charter schools during start-up, nonprofit community-based groups serve as resources for the schools. These support organizations can be divided into a few rough categories:

- ☐ existing community groups (mostly nonprofit) - 22
- ☐ existing schools (public or private) - 10
- ☐ intermediate units or school districts - 6

Fifty percent of the 76 charter schools that completed the 2001-02 academic year were founded with the assistance of these organizations. The most common type of organization to support a charter school is an existing community group. These organizations include local YMCAs, community development groups, and ethnic organizations. Twenty-two charter schools were backed by such groups.

Ten charter schools operated as other schools before being granted a charter. Only one was a traditional public school (Lincoln Charter School in York). The others were either private schools or public alternative schools.

Six charter schools were supported by intermediate units or by local school districts. The majority of these schools are cyber schools that actually operate out of their local Intermediate Units' offices. Another cyber charter school, Western PA Cyber Charter, was sponsored by the local district in Midland. Midland Borough School District's superintendent is the charter school's CAO.

3.6 Cyber Schools

Cyber charter schools grew tremendously, both in number of schools and in number of students served, during the 2001-02 school year. Prior to that year, only two cyber charter schools existed in Pennsylvania –SusQ-Cyber and Western Pennsylvania Cyber Charter. During 2001-02 five new cyber charter schools opened.

The cyber charter schools can be separated into 2 categories in terms of student enrollment–small and very large. Three schools (Midwestern Regional Virtual, 21st Century, and SusQ-Cyber) have enrollments under 200. The other 4 (Western PA Cyber, Einstein, PA Virtual, PA Learners Online) all enroll more than

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[6] Two EMOs, LearnNow and Advantage Schools, merged with Edison and Mosaica, respectively. In 2001-02 Edison managed 3 schools (including 1 former LearnNow school) and Mosaica managed 3 schools (including 1 former Advantage school). The other EMOs were Nobel (3 schools), K12 (1 school), Tutorbots (1 school), and Charter Choice (1 school).

Figure 3:6

Enrollment Distribution for Small Samples of Cyber School Families, Sorted by School

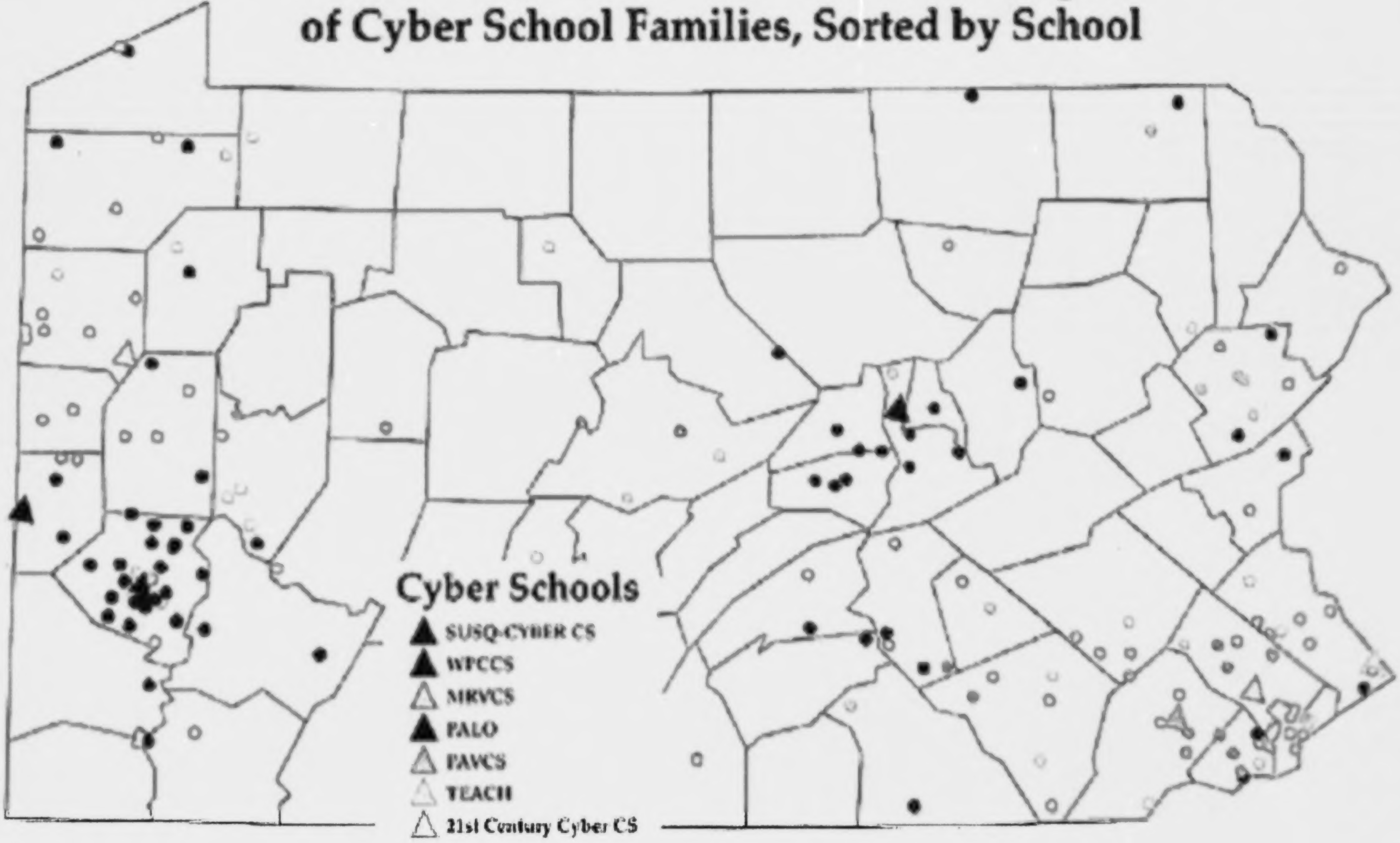
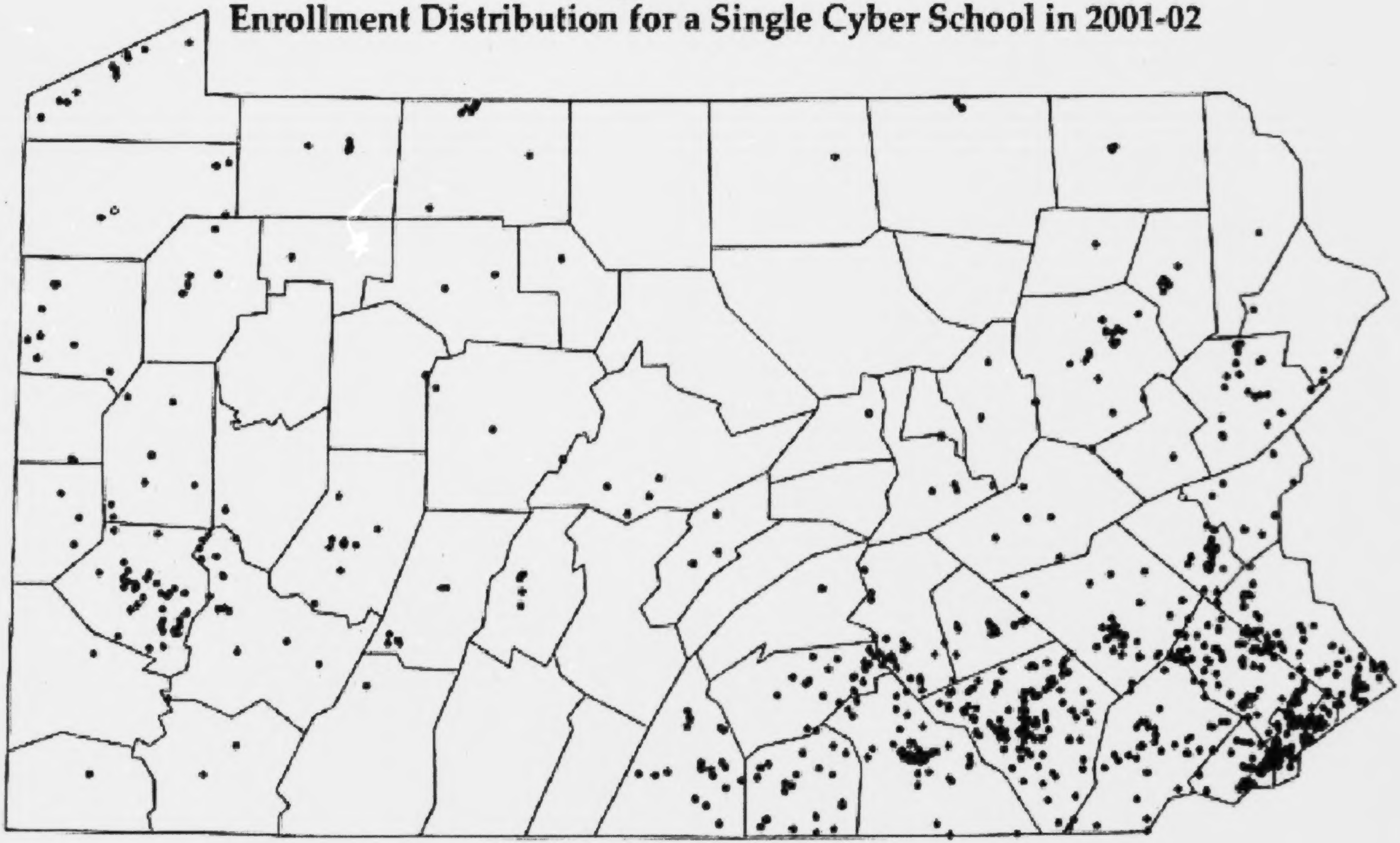


Figure 3:7

Enrollment Distribution for a Single Cyber School in 2001-02



350 students. Western PA Cyber and Einstein[7] each enrolled over 1,000 students. PA Virtual enrolled more than 700 students while offering only kindergarten through grade 2.

Cyber charter schools are able to serve students throughout the commonwealth regardless of where their offices are located. The maps in Figure 3:6 and 3:7 illustrates the residences of a sample of 20-35 students from all seven cyber charter schools. The map in Figure 3:7 shows the residences of more than 2,000 students from one cyber school during the 2001-02 school year.

Cyber charter schools have different relationships with EMOs than do "brick and mortar" charter schools. One cyber charter (PA Virtual) is managed by K12 Inc. Einstein was managed by Tutorbots until the school board terminated its relationship in March 2002. Western PA Cyber Charter School does not use an EMO.

The other four cyber charter schools have close relationships with Intermediate Units around the state. MRVCS, SusQ-Cyber, PA Learners Online, and 21st Century all operate out of their Intermediate Unit's offices. The cyber schools that are closely aligned with the intermediate units have smaller enrollments than the other cyber charter schools (only PALO with 384 had a 2001-02 enrollment over 200).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter had three goals. First, it provided a brief overview of Pennsylvania's charter school law and how its major features compare with laws in other states. This section of the chapter outlined how charters may be created and various provisions that help define charter school autonomy and accountability. Second, the chapter outlined changes in laws and regulations pertaining to special education and cyber schools. Finally, the chapter provided an overview of growth in the number of charter schools and charter school students. As we saw, the charter school movement in Pennsylvania has continued to grow, although with some slowing in the number of new schools. The next chapter will provide more descriptive detail on charter school start-up.

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[7] Einstein's enrollment fluctuated greatly during the school year, but at one time enrolled more than 2,000 students.

Chapter Four
Charter School Start-Up: Resources and Challenges

One assumption of charter school laws is that there will be individuals and groups with the resources, will, and expertise to set up and successfully run charter schools. Without these individuals, charter school choice would be an empty abstraction. This chapter provides descriptions of the types of individuals and groups (which we shall call "founding coalitions") that have successfully started charter schools in Pennsylvania, including their goals and their organizational, fiscal, and political resources. The first section describes the legal and administrative context of charter school start-up. In the second section we examine the Charter School Appeal Board, to which charter applicants may appeal charter denials. The third section discusses the goals of founding coalitions, and the chapter's fourth considers founders' organizational resources. The fifth section takes a look at the types of individuals involved in founding coalitions. The sixth section examines the political constraints and opportunities facing charter school founders. The final section looks at the characteristics of charter schools' host districts to determine whether certain types of districts provide more fertile ground for charters than others.

During our initial study of Pennsylvania charter schools (Miron & Nelson, 2000), one of the key issues we examined was charter school start-up. This chapter, therefore, builds on our findings from the 2000 report. We have updated data and statistics where needed and when possible. We have also either further elaborated the discussion or supplemented our findings with new materials based on data collection from the 2001-02 school year.

The scope of the project prevented us from gathering data on all charter applicants. Thus, most of our discussion draws upon the characteristics of successful founding coalitions. Unfortunately, such data cannot help us determine whether these characteristics were important causes or driving factors in whether a given charter proposal was successful or unsuccessful. [1] This issue deserves further examination, since application success determines the range of choices available to parents and students and because the application and approval process is the first accountability hurdle charter schools must face. Thus, it is the first point at which public authorities can seek to ensure that charter schools use their autonomy in ways consistent with the public interest.

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[1] In the language of causal inference, data on successes can at best identify a set of *sufficient* conditions of success (i.e., factors that *can* bring about an application's success). Such data cannot, however, help us assess whether these factors are also *necessary* conditions of success (i.e., applications that do not have these factors fail). Demonstrating causality requires evaluators to show that a given factor (or set of factors) is both necessary *and* sufficient to produce the outcome in question.

4.1 Legal and Administrative Context

In order to assess the legal requirements and restrictions on charter school start-up, we must address three questions: (1) Who may apply for charters? (2) What resources are provided for founding coalitions? and (3) Who may grant charters and according to what criteria? Each question is addressed in the paragraphs that follow.

Act 22 is relatively permissive on the question of who may apply for charters and on founders' ability to build upon preexisting schools. First, the law allows virtually any individual or group to apply for charters, except sectarian and for-profit organizations. Among the types of organizations and individuals specifically mentioned in the statute are teachers, parents and guardians, nonsectarian colleges and universities, not-for-profit corporations, associations, or any combination of the aforementioned categories. Second, Act 22 places few restrictions on founders' ability to build upon preexisting schools. In addition to new start-ups, the law allows founders to convert both public and private schools to charter schools. This distinguishes it from charter laws like Georgia's, which only allows for public conversions. Applications for public conversions, however, must include a petition with the signatures of 50 percent of the parents and 50 percent of teaching staff. Finally, unlike many state charter school laws, Act 22 places no caps on the number of charter schools (see chapter 3 for more on Act 22).

Starting a new school is a very resource-intensive activity. Before opening a charter school, its founders must spend a considerable amount of time planning and drafting the charter application. This requires time from individuals with skill and experience in education, finance, and organizational design. Founders must also begin to find physical facilities. Below we include a list of the topics and issues that charter applications must address:

- ☐ Identification of charter applicant
- ☐ Name of school
- ☐ Grade or age served
- ☐ Proposed governance structure
- ☐ Mission and education goals, including curriculum and assessment methods
- ☐ Admission policy
- ☐ Criteria for student evaluation
- ☐ Suspension and expulsion policy
- ☐ Involvement of community groups
- ☐ Financial and audit plans
- ☐ Complaint procedures
- ☐ Description and address of physical facility
- ☐ Proposed school calendar
- ☐ Proposed faculty and professional development plan
- ☐ Plans for student participation in school district extracurricular activities
- ☐ Report of criminal history records for employees
- ☐ Official child abuse clearance statements
- ☐ Plan for liability and insurance coverage

Compared with many other states, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has been quite successful in obtaining federal and state start-up funds and distributing these funds to schools more quickly. This includes a pool of funds for planning grants to facilitate the development of charter applications. According to official records, the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office of Educational Initiatives has awarded 273 planning grants over the past 7 years. The median grant amount is $20,000. We shall have more to say about charter schools' fiscal resources in the next chapter.

Compared with other charter school laws, Act 22 is fairly restrictive in its requirements for chartering agencies. According to Act 22, only districts may sponsor charter schools. This distinguishes Act 22 from "stronger" or "more permissive" charter laws–such as those in Minnesota, Michigan, New York, and elsewhere–that allow universities, state agencies, and other public bodies to grant charters and oversee the schools. Charter applicants, however, may apply for "regional charters." Regional charters are granted and overseen by more than one school district. The idea behind regional charters was to encourage institutions that serve more than one school district–museums, universities, etc.– to propose and operate charter schools.[2] The Charter Appeals Board (CAB), however, pointed out that Act 22 permits charter schools to draw students from more than one district, whether they hold regional or single district charters.[3] The effect of CAB's decision may have removed some of the incentive for founding coalitions to apply for regional charters. Indeed, of the 90 charter schools operating as of Fall 2002, only 8 are regional charters. Three of these 8 are cyber charter schools.[4] Of these, the number of sponsoring districts has ranged from 2 to 18. In most of these cases, the sponsoring districts were involved in the early planning stages of the charter application and expressed early support. Table 4:1 lists the regional charter schools and the number of sponsoring districts.

Once they receive charter applications, Act 22 directs school districts to judge them in light of four criteria. First, applications must demonstrate sustainable support for the charter school plan. The issue of how precisely to gauge community support has come up in a number of cases heard by the Charter Appeals Board. In these cases, the Board has made it clear that applications must demonstrate support for the particular school in question, not just the charter concept.[5] The remainder of the cases, however, make it clear that the Board prefers a fairly liberal interpretation of the term "support." Indeed, the Board has held that applications must show only that there is support for the charter school and that evidence of opposition to the school is irrelevant. Moreover, the CAB has held that lack of support from any particular stakeholder group (e.g., district teachers) is not necessarily fatal to the application.[6] The Board has also held that the requirement that applications provide evidence of community support does not imply that charters must show why stakeholder groups support the charter. Moreover, it has held that support for a district in no way diminishes a charter application.[7]

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[2] Personal correspondence with Ron Cowell, former chair of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Committee on Education, May 11, 2000.

[3] Collegium Charter School, CAB 1999-9; Hills Academy Charter School, CAB 1999-12; Phoenix, CAB 1999-10.

[4] Two other cyber schools (Midwestern Regional Virtual and 21st Century) were each chartered by just one district, though each school's board includes representatives from several local school districts.

[5] Shenango Valley Regional Charter School, CAB 1999-11.

Table 4:1 Regional Charter Schools, Fall 2002

Name of School	*Number of Districts*	*School Year Opened*
Central PA Digital	18	2002-03
Northeast Charter School	14	1998-99
PA Learners Online	10	2001-02
Centre Learning Community	3	1998-99
SUSQ-CYBER Charter School	3	1998-99
Lehigh Valley Academy	2	2002-03
Vitalistic Therapeutic	2	2000-01
Keystone Education Center	2	1997-98

The second requirement is that applications must demonstrate that the charter is capable of providing a "comprehensive learning experience" to its students. Third, charter applications must provide information on a number of issues listed in the statute, including governance structure, admissions policies, discipline policies, and many others (sec. 1719-A). Finally, charter applications must demonstrate that the proposed charter school has the potential to serve as a model for other schools. However, the Charter Appeals Board has ruled that the economic feasibility of a charter innovation for a district should have no bearing on whether the charter is approved.[8]

4.2 The Charter Appeals Board

The Charter Appeals Board (CAB) plays a critical role in the charter application process. It is beyond the scope of this report to provide an extensive evaluation of the CAB and its processes. We can, however, provide an overview of its processes and some of the policy issues raised by its role in the start-up process.

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[6] Souderton Charter School Collaborative, CAB 1999-2; Ronald H. Brown Charter School, CAB 1999-1; Shenango; Hills Academy Charter School, CAB 1999-12; Phoenix Academy Charter School, CAB 1999-10; William Bradford Academy Charter School, CAB 1999-8.

[7] William Bradford Academy Charter School, CAB 1999-8

[8] Vitalistic Therapeutic Center Charter School, CAB 1999-6.

The CAB was in many ways the result of a political compromise between those who wished to give school districts sole authority to approve, oversee, and renew charters and those who wished to spread such authority among a number of actors.[9] As part of the compromise, the CAB was not formally constituted until July 1, 1999–some two years after the effective date of Act 22. The CAB is composed of seven members, including the Secretary of Education and six others appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate.[10] Among the six appointed members, one individual is to come from each of the following categories:

- parent of a school-aged child
- local school board member
- public school teacher
- faculty member or administrator in higher education
- businessperson
- member of the State Board of Education

The CAB's primary function is to hear the appeals of charter schools and their founding coalitions whose applications for charters have been denied by school districts. These can include denials of original applications, denials of applications resubmitted after an initial denial, and revocation of a charter.[11]

The CAB employs a quasi-judicial process in considering appeals, complete with hearings, records, and counsel for both sides. In order to certify an appeal, applicants must gather signatures from 2 percent of the adults in the community or 1,000 adults, whichever is less. The petition for appeal and the signatures are then presented to the local Court of Common Pleas for a hearing on the "sufficiency" of the petition. Provided the petition is in order, the Court of Common Pleas forwards it to the CAB. Having received a certified appeal, the CAB provides written notice of acceptance, assigns a docket number, and requests that the district provide a certified record of the charter denial proceedings. The official record of the appeal includes the following:

- charter application
- supplemental materials submitted by the charter applicants
- transcripts of testimony taken by the district
- exhibits offered in conjunction with testimony before the district
- any other documents the district relied upon in making its decision
- the district's written decision to deny the charter

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[9] Personal correspondence with Ron Cowell, former chair of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Committee on Education, May 11, 2000.

[10] Descriptive information on the CAB and its procedures is taken from PDE's Web site: http://www.pde.psu.edu/charter.html.

[11] As of Fall 2002, only two charters had been revoked. Both schools appealed the revocations to the CAB, which upheld the district's position in each case.

With the record in hand, the CAB must assign a hearing officer to the case and meet within 30 days of receiving the materials. This officer holds prehearing conferences with counsel for both the district and the charter school. After a formal hearing, the CAB renders a written decision. If it upholds the denial or revocation of a charter, it simply notifies both parties of its decision. If the CAB overturns district denial or revocation, the school district must grant (or reinstate) the charter within 10 days of receiving the notice. If the school district fails to grant the charter within this period, the charter is signed by the Chair of the CAB.

As of October 10, 2002, the CAB had issued decisions on 37 appeals. Of those decisions, 15 overturned the district's denial of a charter. Thus, charter schools have prevailed in 41 percent of the cases appealed to the CAB. In all but one of those cases, the school district failed to grant the charter within the prescribed 10 days, requiring the chair of the CAB to sign the charter.[12] State courts have issued decisions on at least 12 appeals of CAB decisions. In 10 of these appeals the state courts affirmed the CAB's decision. One appeal was dismissed, which meant the CAB decision stood, and one appealed was remanded to the CAB.[13]

Along with providing a "second chance" for founding coalitions frustrated by school districts' denials or inaction, through its written decisions the CAB also provides interpretations of Act 22. We have referred to these precedents when expounding on relevant sections of the Act.

Some stakeholders have raised concerns about the CAB's processes and its role in charter approval. While it is well beyond the scope of this report to provide a complete evaluation of the CAB, we mention three such concerns. It is important to note that this evaluation makes no claims about the veracity of these claims. They are merely offered as issues for further consideration.

First, some stakeholders have questioned whether CAB members have the time and resources to fully consider the appeals, especially in light of the fact that most or all members have other full-time jobs, and given the extensive written records associated with some of the appeals. One appeal record, for instance, was approximately 12 inches thick. Defenders of the process counter that board members have a staff that can summarize documents and otherwise ease the burden.[14] Second, some stakeholders worry that the burdens of the appeals process favor districts, which generally have more legal and financial resources to draw upon than charter schools. As we have seen, charter schools have won just about as often as they have lost CAB decisions (Duquesne Charter School Project, 2000). With no way of observing the denials that were not appealed, however, it is possible that a great number of denied founding coalitions balked at the costs of appeal and decided ex ante not to pursue an appeal. Thus, looking at charter schools' "batting average" before the CAB without understanding the factors that determine how and whether they "come to the plate" in the first place might provide an incorrect estimate of the Board's proclivities. Finally, some stakeholders point out that because many decisions are rendered close to the beginning of the school year, this creates an intolerable amount of uncertainty for charter school personnel (Duquesne Charter School Project, 2000). It is important to note, however, that the timing of CAB decisions depends in part on factors outside its control, including when school districts deny charters and when founding coalitions petition the CAB.

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[12] Unfortunately, we could not determine how many denials were *not* appealed or whether those that were appealed are distinctive in some way. For instance, it is possible that only the strongest applications are appealed. Hence, we cannot say with any confidence that any given appeal has a 41 percent chance of success. Indeed, the charter school success rate might be lower if more cases were appealed.

[13] In the remanded case the Commonwealth Court sent the case back to the CAB to review a finalized management agreement between a charter school and its EMO. The CAB issued its previous ruling based on a "model" agreement (Lincoln-Edison Charter School CAB 2000-11).

[14] "The Charter Schools Appeals Board," a panel discussion on the Charter Appeals Board at the Pennsylvania State Charter School Conference, State College, PA, April 2000. The discussion included criticisms and defenses of the CAB. The panelists were Amos Goodall, Esq., Scott Etter, Esq., and Connie H. Davis.

A final issue, and one that reaches beyond CAB processes, concerns how charter schools approved on appeal will fare in what is likely to be a hostile school district environment. Because many of the schools with charters from the CAB are new, we cannot provide an empirically grounded answer to this important question. We will explore this issue in the next and final year of our contract. Nevertheless, preliminary indications are that charters approved on appeal will not have smooth relationships with their school districts.

Ten of the schools operating during the 2001-02 academic year were granted charters solely by the CAB.[15] Only one of these, Collegium, has had its charter renewed by its host district. In this case the major point of contention between the district and the charter school was the presence of an EMO, Mosaica Education Inc. When the school severed its relationship with Mosaica, relations with the district improved and a five-year renewal was granted in March 2002.

Since the other nine schools have charters expiring in 2003, 2004, and 2005, charter renewal is not yet an issue. However, at least three of these schools have been involved in litigation with their host districts since the CAB granted the charters.

4.3 Founders' Goals

Earlier in the chapter, we described the legal and administrative contexts of charter development and approval. Statutory provisions and administrative structures, however, tell us only what is legally and institutionally permissible. In order to ascertain what is practically possible, we must look further to the resources, constraints, and opportunities that would-be founding coalitions face in seeking to found charter schools. We begin by examining some of the personal characteristics of those who have successfully founded charter schools in Pennsylvania.

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[15] One other school, Vitalistic Therapeutic Charter School, was granted a charter by the CAB in an appeal of Bethlehem's denial. Vitalistic was also granted a charter by the Allentown school district.

Charter school founders are examples of what is known in the policy literature as "policy entrepreneurs" (see, e.g., Scheider & Teske, 1992; Mintrom, 2000). Policy entrepreneurs are those who look for and seize upon opportunities to bring about new policies, institutional structures, and organizational forms. Whether a given individual or organization is a policy entrepreneur, therefore, depends both on personal characteristics (vision, ambition, charisma) and on the types of opportunities afforded by their environments. While it is difficult to observe vision and ambition in large groups of individuals, we can offer observations on the identities and goals of successful charter founders.

Interviews and document analysis suggest that charter school founders in Pennsylvania have had fairly clear goals when they set out to develop their applications. Among these were to

- Provide choice for low-income children.
- Provide a venue for the realization of good ideas in districts that were reportedly hindered by bureaucratic encumbrances.
- Promote change in the host district and surrounding districts.
- Provide students with a local school after a district closes or consolidates a school.
- Inculcate a particular cultural or ethnic perspective.
- In the case of conversion schools, continue and extend previous services. In some cases, this involves extending preschool services into lower elementary levels. In other cases, it involves providing services at the same grade levels but to a broader population of students. In a number of cases, the desire to procure a more reliable revenue stream was an important motive for converting a private school into a charter school.

4.4 Founders' Organizational Resources

Actualizing these goals, however, can often be a very costly and time-consuming undertaking. First, and perhaps most obviously, developing a charter school and shepherding it through the approval process takes money. Fiscal resources might be necessary to buy materials or to compensate people who take time off from jobs and other remunerative activities to develop the charter. Second, founders are more likely to succeed if they can draw upon individuals with certain technical skills related to education. Other things being equal, charter applications are more likely to persuade authorizing bodies if the founders appear to know what they are talking about. Many founding coalitions have included current and former teachers and administrators who bring such expertise to the table. In addition, applicants must assure authorizing bodies that they know how to manage personnel, plan, budget, and account for expenditures. Third, charter applicants must have a stock of what social scientists call "social capital." Social capital is what allows individuals, each with their own preferences and plans, to come together to work toward shared goals. Social capital is often developed through longstanding relationships among individuals. The importance of such resources is underscored by the fact that, under the terms of Act 22, charter applicants must show that they have the capacity to provide a comprehensive educational experience for their students and that they could provide a model for emulation by other schools.

Preexisting organizations can provide all three types of resources. Not surprisingly, therefore, the first and most notable common characteristic of successful charter school founding coalitions is that most included personnel from either preexisting schools, community development organizations, ethnic-based organizations, or other nonprofit organizations. Such organizational resources have included the following:

- Preexisting schools converted to charter schools often provide personnel and institutional wisdom from years of operation.
- Preexisting nonprofit, community-based social service organizations provide both administrative expertise and access to funding sources (both within the organization and through longstanding relationships with external funders).
- Relationships with universities often bring the technical expertise of education school faculty.
- Ties to business leaders often bring access to funders and other influential members of the community.

Thus, while many of Pennsylvania's charter schools are new start-ups from a legal point view, even these schools often draw upon rather impressive organizational and social networks.

Nonprofit community-based organizations are extensively involved in the founding and start-up of charter schools in Pennsylvania. This is a rather unique feature of the Pennsylvania initiative that makes it different from other states. Partnerships with nonprofit community organizations have long been considered a potential source of support for public schools, particularly in urban areas. There are likely a number of reasons to explain why community organizations are involved in only a limited way in our public schools. Charter schools in Pennsylvania, however, have been effective in working with these organizations. Likewise, community organizations have come to see charter schools as a means of promoting their own goals by supplementing the services they already provide.

Other charter schools were opened with assistance from for-profit companies. Two of the 31 schools opened in the first 2 years under Act 22 were involved with for-profit educational management organizations (EMOs). In the 1999-00 school year, 3 of the 17 new charter schools were operated by EMOs. EMOs operated 6 of the 19 new schools in the 2000-01 school year and 3 of the 11 new schools for 2001-02. This represents a big jump; but compared with other states, the involvement of EMOs is still quite limited. The low profile of EMOs in Pennsylvania's charter school reform sets it apart from a number of other states. In Michigan, for instance, some three-quarters of charter schools are operated by EMOs (Miron & Nelson, 2002).

We close this section by offering a simple typology that summarizes the role of organizations in the charter school start-up process (see Table 4:2). On the horizontal axis we identify the number of schools that have clear connections to community and other nongovernmental organizations, EMOs, and Intermediate Units (IU) or school districts. This latter group of schools includes cyber schools that operate out of IU offices and other schools that act as an extension of their chartering district(s) or as a complement to the services they provide. The vertical axis distinguishes schools that developed from preexisting schools (either public or private) from those that were started from scratch.

Table 4:2 Organizational Bases of Pennsylvania Charter Schools

	For-Profit EMO	*Community-Based Organization*	*IU/ School District*	*None*
Based on preexisting school	(1) 1.3%	(1) 1.3%	(1) 1.3%	(8) 10.5%
Start-up school	(13) 17.1%	(24) 31.6%	(5) 6.6%	(23) 30.3%
Total	(14) 18.4%	(25) 32.9%	(6) 7.9%	(31) 40.8%

Source: Analysis by The Evaluation Center based on 76 schools operating in 2001-02.

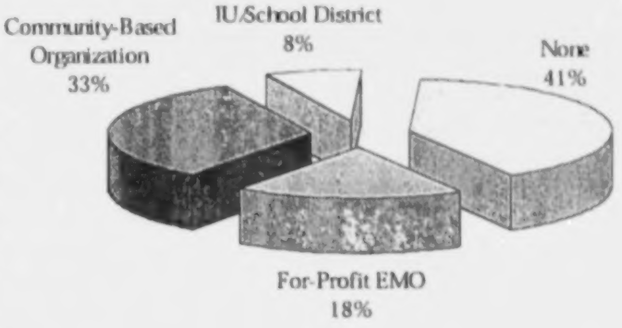

Figure 4:1 Distribution of Charter Schools by Presence and Nature of Organizational Base

The data in Table 4:2 and illustrated in Figure 4:1 clearly illustrate the extensive organizational base behind the charter schools. Sixty percent of the schools had a nongovernmental organization behind them or were supported by the school district(s) or the Intermediate Unit. Altogether, 14 percent of the schools were conversion schools and 86 percent were new start-ups. The group of schools most challenged is likely to be the 23 start-up schools with no organizational base behind them.

4.5 Types of Individuals Involved in Charter Founding Coalitions

Some individuals found among the ranks of charter school founders are former public school teachers and administrators. In most cases these individuals are in some way dissatisfied with public schools. Interviews with charter school chief administrative officers (CAOs) suggest that many members of founding coalitions are quite pessimistic about the current system of public education. For at least one founding coalition, the public school system was so bad that just about any alternative, including but not limited to charter schools, "had to be better." Other founders, by contrast, were less strident in their criticisms of public education. Indeed, a founder of another charter school remarked that his school's founding coalition believed that public schools and their staffs are full of good ideas, but that talented individuals have too few opportunities to innovate in most public schools. Indeed, many charter school founders report that they maintain friendships and professional relationships with officials in their former schools. A few (though not many) report exchanging ideas with district personnel.

University academics make up a second group of individuals among charter school founding coalitions. Such individuals often view charter schools as a venue in which to try out new and innovative ideas about education. The level of such individuals' involvement in charter schools ranges from central to merely advisory. One charter school, for instance, was founded by a professor of education and graduate students. In other cases, committees formed to draft charter documents have included university faculty. In still other cases, academicians have advised founding coalitions without formally participating in the drafting of charter documents.

Members of the business community make up a third group represented in founding coalitions. In at least a few cases, leaders from local businesses have helped create the initial vision for a charter school or have served on committees created to draft charter applications. Often, business involvement comes through participation on boards that oversee nonprofit organizations.

In a small number of cases, charter proposals were tendered by groups formed specifically for charter development. In one case, the group that developed and submitted the charter application had come together initially to sue the local district for providing an inferior education to many students.

In the previous section, we emphasized that community-based nonprofit organizations as well as for-profit EMOs have been involved in starting and operating charter schools. These groups, of course, have been very critical in the initial founding group. In a few cases, however, the involvement of the EMO or the community-based organization came after the charter school was started.

While local districts have been generally opposed to charter schools, we found 6 schools in which either local district officials or the Intermediate Unit were involved in starting or promoting the start of a charter school. These schools typically have been designed to provide complementary services not already provided by the local districts. Most often this involves the cyber schools.

Parents were conspicuously absent from many founding coalitions during the first two years of charter schools in Pennsylvania. However, parents have been heavily involved in the founding coalitions of a few charter schools opened in the past few years. There is evidence that parents become involved in the later stages of charter school development and operation (see chapter 9). However, our interviews produced little mention of parents as direct and driving forces in charter development. This does not rule out the possibility that parents indirectly influence charter development. Indeed, one might argue that the need to attract students (and their parents) in order to obtain funding means that founding coalitions must anticipate parents' preferences when deciding whether to write a charter application and in designing the charter document. Indeed, some CAOs indicated as much during interviews. Nonetheless, we found little evidence that parents are taking the lead in instigating the charter development process in Pennsylvania.

4.6 Political Constraints and Opportunities

The charter approval process is far from a narrowly technical one. The authority to approve or deny charters is given to school districts through local school boards. As democratically elected bodies, school boards respond at least in part to their constituencies. Consequently, the decision to approve or deny a charter is at least partially a political process. Indeed, one criterion on which school districts must evaluate charter applications is the level of sustainable community support. Thus, we must add local political climate to the list of factors that influence the founding of charter schools. As policy entrepreneurs, successful founding coalitions must not only provide resources, goals, and vision, they must also be able to read and exploit opportunities created by the constellation of local political forces.

Generally, school boards have considerable incentives to deny charters. First, because students who leave district schools to attend charters take with them most of their per-pupil financial allotment, districts stand to lose considerable sums of money.[16] In the extreme, this could force districts to lay off teachers and staff, cut back on programs, or even close schools. Second, and less tangibly, approving a charter might be seen as an admission by the district that it has failed to provide a high quality education for all its students. With this might come a diminution of public prestige and a decline in district staff morale.

In spite of these considerable incentives, as of Fall 2002, Pennsylvania school districts had approved 81 of 94 charters; the remaining 13 were approved on appeal by the CAB.[17] It is important to note that 43 of these 81 district-approved charters were approved by School District of Philadelphia.[18] While the scope of the study prevented us from conducting a complete political analysis of charter approval, we asked charter school CAOs to identify the reasons they thought districts supported their charter schools. In many instances charter school CAOs reported that denying the charter would have subjected the local school board to a political backlash. In the words of one CAO, the district approved the charter "because they felt they had to." A few informants indicated that the local boards were under the impression that, under the law, they didn't have the choice of denying charter applications. When the appeals board started reviewing cases, however, districts obviously became aware that they had such a choice.

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[16] Last year, Act 88 provided for partial reimbursement from the state for a percentage of the money districts sent to charter schools. However, the legislation applied only to the 2001-02 school year, not to future years.

[17] Ninety charter schools are operating as of Fall 2002. Four others have been approved, but these schools are not yet operating.

[18] We have no data on the number of charter applications that school districts have denied.

Political support for charter applications often comes from two sources. First, charter schools often tap into general skepticism about "big government" and educational "bureaucracies." Indeed, many charter applicants are no doubt helped by the public perception that they are dynamic and entrepreneurial Davids fighting entrenched and ossified district Goliaths. Second, founding coalitions can often draw upon their ties with powerful community leaders. Ties with community organizations often align charter applicants with highly visible community figures, including business leaders, foundation program officers, prominent academics and, in some cases, mayors and other elected officials.

Not all charter applicants assume the role of David fighting Goliath, however. One CAO, for instance, said that his founding coalition was successful in part because it was "upbeat about public education." By emphasizing that public schools already have a great deal of talent and potential for innovation, this coalition sought to frame its efforts as a form of cooperation with the district.

Indeed, not all charter approvals come about as the result of political muscle and tactics. Some districts apparently think they have something to gain from approving charters. First, a number of Pennsylvania charter schools target at-risk populations and other students who are likely to create heavy burdens for district schools. Indeed, it is not unusual for districts to actively support and even cosponsor such charter schools. The CAO of one such charter school speculates, however, that his founding coalition would have faced rough sledding had its charter concept targeted mainstream or gifted students. Second, several charter school CAOs speculated that charter schools provide a convenient whipping boy for districts. For instance, several CAOs reported that district personnel had cited funding losses due to charter schools to justify poor performance on standardized tests and cutbacks in programs. Finally, in at least one instance, a charter school and its host district jointly procured a multi-million-dollar foundation grant. The CAO of the charter school speculates that funders might not have given the grant to the district without the presence of the charter school. To some, therefore, approving a charter appears not as an admission of failure but as an indication that the district is working hard to improve its programs.

We must emphasize, however, that our inability to examine the attributes of unsuccessful charter school applications and founding coalitions leaves us unable to assess whether the aforementioned resources and conditions have any causal importance. Indeed, it may be nothing more than coincidence that most successful founding coalitions, for instance, have strong ties to preexisting community organizations and schools. We hope that others will examine this issue in greater detail.

4.7 Characteristics of Chartering Districts

Having examined some of the attributes of the founding coalitions that develop and present charter applications, we now examine the characteristics of chartering districts. Indeed, founding coalitions, like all policy entrepreneurs, must draw upon the fiscal, human, and political resources they find in their communities. The analysis, therefore, begins to shed light on whether districts with certain types of characteristics are more fertile ground for charter schools than others. Once, again, however, we are limited by the fact that we did not have good data on the incidence of charter proposals. The analysis below simply compares districts with approved charters with districts without approved charters.[19] We have no systematic way of knowing how many districts without approved charter schools rejected a charter proposal. The analysis in this section includes all 76 charter schools completing the 2001-02 academic year.

We began our analysis by investigating differences in the number of potential charter school students in a district. In many ways, this is difficult to estimate, since it is a function of not only the number of students in a district, but also the number of others in surrounding districts who might be interested in an alternative to their districts' offerings. Moreover, the population must include both public and private school students. Given the limits of the study, we simply compared the public school enrollment for chartering and nonchartering districts. Data came from PDE school profiles for the 2001-02 school year. Table 4:3 presents the median total district enrollment for both chartering and nonchartering districts. Chartering districts tend to have significantly higher enrollments than nonchartering districts. Indeed, where the median nonchartering district has 1,749 students enrolled, the median chartering district enrolls 3,446 students (this number is reduced to 3,377 if Philadelphia is excluded). In order to test whether charter schools are more likely to be proposed and approved in districts with concentrations of students at certain grade levels, we performed the same analysis for elementary, middle school, and high school grades. We found, however, that the same pattern persists across all levels.

Under Act 22, charter school students come with per-pupil subsidies. Thus, we might hypothesize that districts with higher per-pupil expenditures will be more likely to attract charter applications. As Table 4:3 shows, the median per-pupil expenditures of chartering districts is actually $15 lower than the same figure for nonchartering districts.

As discussed above, charter applications can be assisted by public support for charter schools. Since it is widely believed that charter schools are in part a response to public dissatisfaction with public schools, we might hypothesize that lower performing districts would be more likely to attract and approve charter schools than high performing districts. In order to test this, for each district we calculated a median aggregate PSSA (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) score for all grades. Table 4:3 shows that, as expected, chartering districts tend to have lower overall PSSA scores than nonchartering districts. The average chartering district reported a combined PSSA score of 1,222 for 2001-02. The average nonchartering district, by contrast, reported a combined PSSA score of 1,341.

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[19] The analysis in this section reports bivariate relationships-relationships between any one of a number of district attributes and whether the district sponsors a charter school. Such analyses, however, can often be deceiving. Apparent correlations between two variables can be "spurious." That is, they can falsely assign to one variable the influence of another. For instance, it is well known that the relationship between expenditure levels and test scores often "disappears" once we "control for" family income. In order to account for this possibility, we confirmed the bivariate analyses with multivariate analysis (logistic regression), which allows for such complex correlations. While the chartering-nonchartering differences continued to be statistically discernible in the multivariate analysis ($p<0.05$), the other differences were not. Similarly, the effect sizes changed in the multivariate analysis. Readers are invited to contact the authors for details on this analysis.

Table 4:3 Chartering and Nonchartering Districts Compared

Variable	*Nonchartering*	*Chartering*
Median total district enrollment (2001-02)	1,749	3,446
Median per-pupil expenditure (2000-01)	$8,319	$8,304
Median aggregate PSSA score (2001-02)	1341	1221
Median % low income students (2001-02)	20.3	63.9
Median % nonwhite students (2001-02)	4.9	67.0

Source: PDE school profiles

Note: Mann-Whitney rank sum tests show that all group differences are statistically discernible at the .01 level or lower. PSSA scores are averages across all grades and for both the math and reading portions. Averages are weighted by test participation rates. Writing scores are omitted from the averages because not all schools administered the exam. The income, race, and educational variables are all weighted by total district enrollment.

Because low achievement is correlated with demographic factors, we might also expect that charter schools are more likely to be located in districts with high concentrations of low income and nonwhite students. To test the income hypothesis, we examined data gathered by PDE school profiles on the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.[20] Table 4:3 provides evidence for both hypotheses. In the average chartering district, 63.9 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, compared with only 20.3 percent in nonchartering districts. In addition, approximately 67 percent of students in chartering districts were nonwhite, compared with 4.9 percent in nonchartering districts.

The foregoing analysis is subject to important limitations. First, it is difficult to measure many of the factors that might lead to charter applications and approvals across districts. Moreover, there are many other factors, such as district political environment, that remain unaccounted for. Nonetheless, these data provide a useful general profile of chartering districts. Demographically, the average chartering district is larger, poorer, and less white though the differences between chartering and nonchartering districts have been narrowing over the last five years (chapter 6 contains more details about the demographic background of students enrolled in charter schools and host districts over time).

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[20] Readers should bear in mind that free/reduced-price lunch status is a function of both student need and schools' diligence in registering students for lunch programs. Thus, the indicator likely includes a considerable amount of "noise."

4.8 Summary

This chapter explored the process by which founding coalitions develop charter applications and by which they are considered and ultimately approved or denied by districts. We began with an overview of the legal and administrative context of charter start-up, including a discussion of who may apply for and grant charters. Under Act 22 virtually any individual or group may apply for a charter, with the exception of for-profit and sectarian groups. Act 22 is somewhat more restrictive, however, in defining who may grant charters. Act 22 grants primary authority to consider and approve (or deny) charters to local districts. Since July 1999, however, the Charter Appeals Board (CAB) has heard appeals from denied applicants, those who believe their charter has been unjustly revoked, and those who believe that a school district has wrongly chosen not to renew a charter.

It is difficult to assess the appeals process and its role in the charter start-up process. While the scope of this report prevents a full evaluation of the CAB, the process does raise a number of concerns that policymakers might wish to address. The appeals process can be quite complex, time-consuming, and expensive. Thus, some observers doubt that it is a feasible avenue for some charter applicants. If this is true, then the appeals process might not provide the counterbalance to school district sovereignty that it was designed to. The resource requirements of appeals might also have tilted the process in favor of districts, which tend to have more legal expertise and other resources than charter schools. In spite of this, charter schools have won more than 40 percent of their appeals. We do not know, however, how many denied applicants were dissuaded by the costs of pursuing an appeal. While it is not our place to judge whether the process is too onerous, policymakers should consider whether its complexities and costs to charter schools are consistent with the balance of power Act 22 sought to create between school districts and other outside actors in the charter approval process.

Another issue raised by the appeals process concerns the fate of schools whose charters are approved when the CAB overrules the school district. Most such schools are a few years away from seeking renewal of their respective charters. However, preliminary indications are that these schools have unusually strained relations with their host districts.

Finally, we considered the resources required to start a charter school and the types of district conditions that appear to provide fertile ground for charters. Not surprisingly, charter schools appear to be born of dissatisfaction with district public schools, evidenced by low PSSA scores. These districts, in turn, tend to have higher concentrations of poor and nonwhite students. The chapter's most striking finding, however, is the extent to which successful founding coalitions appear to have relied on ties with community-based nonprofit organizations. These organizational ties are a key strength of Pennsylvania's charter schools. Founding any new institution, not least a school, takes a tremendous amount of resources–fiscal, human, and political. Pennsylvania charter schools are no doubt stronger and more viable because of these long-existing links with community groups. Moreover, some might argue that charter schools should not be approved unless their prospects for long-term survival are enhanced by these resources.

From another point of view, such dependence on external groups casts some doubt on the scalability of the charter school reform in Pennsylvania. One might imagine that there are only so many organizations willing and able to undertake the burden of supporting charter schools. If Pennsylvania's charter school law is designed to provide viable educational choices for a large proportion of its students, such organizational dependence might in the long run limit many students' access to these choices. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that Pennsylvania's charter movement continues to grow apace. However, policymakers should closely monitor the start-up process in the coming years.

In the end, the charter school start-up process is a part of Act 22's accountability design. Approval, after all, is the first point at which public authorities and their constituents can seek to ensure that charter schools are likely to use their autonomy in ways consistent with the public interest. As policymakers consider the start-up process, they may decide that it is better to approve fewer schools in order to minimize the risks associated with letting some bad schools come into existence. Or, they may decide to liberalize the start-up process in order to minimize the opportunity costs associated with failing to approve some potentially strong and innovative schools.

In the next chapter we return to the issue of charter school resources by examining the operating finances of the Commonwealth's charter schools.

Chapter Five
Charter School Finance

The previous chapter examined the persons, organizations, and processes that led to the development and start-up of charter schools. We suggested that founding a charter school requires a great deal of fiscal, human, and political resources. This chapter focuses on fiscal resources. It also moves our discussion from charter start-up to operations. Fiscal resources are, indeed, a crucial input in the educational process.[1] In this chapter we address three general questions:

- ❍ What are the sources of charter schools' operating revenues?
- ❍ How do charter schools spend their money? How do these expenditure patterns compare with those of other public schools?
- ❍ Are charter schools fiscally healthy?

Charter schools differ from traditional public schools in that they are also more directly accountable to the market. Funding for charter schools is largely based on the number of students they enroll. Consequently, charter schools that fail to attract and retain students will go out of business.

There has been considerable debate about the amount of funding that charter school receive. Proponents claim that they do not receive enough, especially given that these schools are often new start-ups. Critics claim that charter school receive too much. In this chapter we will examine revenues and spending patterns of charter and noncharter public schools. As we have argued in an earlier book (Miron & Nelson, 2002), an appropriate analysis of charter school finance must go beyond simple claims about whether charter schools receive more or less than noncharter public schools. Instead, the real question centers on whether charter schools receive more or less than noncharter public schools that offer comparable services to similar students.

Because financial data require more time for auditing, we could not always acquire the most up-to-date financial data, particularly when it dealt with revenues. For this reason, our analysis of revenues is based on data for the 1999-00 school year reported in the School Evaluation Services section of the Standard and Poors Web site.[2] We obtained longitudinal data for expenditures covering 1997-98 to 2000-01 from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Another important limitation to keep in mind is that many of the charter schools are still early in the start-up phase while the districts with which we compare the charter schools are well-established organizations.

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[1] There is considerable academic debate over the effectiveness of increasing spending on school "production." However, even those who contend that increased expenditures are not a *sufficient* condition of student achievement often agree that it is a *necessary* condition. Moreover, recent studies have begun to find that variations in student achievement are, indeed, associated with variations in expenditures (see Grissmer et al., 2000; Weglinsky, 1997). For a more general discussion, see Hanushek (1997).

5.1 Revenue Sources

Just as local districts that grant the charters are the primary overseers of charter schools, they are also the primary funding source for most charter schools. With the exception of specific federal and state grants and funds raised locally, the vast majority of funds charter schools receive are funneled through school districts that send student to the charter schools. This distinguishes Pennsylvania from a number of other states such as Michigan or Connecticut, in which most charter school funds come directly from the state.

An important part of the charter school and school choice concept is that public revenues follow students, whether they choose to attend district schools or charter schools. In theory, then, students are able to choose whether or not to attend a charter school based solely on educational criteria, without significant concern for finance. As the law is written, however, charter school students in Pennsylvania take with them less than their full per-pupil allotment. For most students, a charter school receives from the students' home district the total budgeted per-pupil amount *minus* expenditures on the following:

☐ nonpublic programs
☐ adult education programs
☐ community and junior college programs
☐ transportation
☐ special education
☐ facilities acquisition
☐ construction and improvement services
☐ debt service and fund transfers

For each special education student, a charter school receives from the student's home district the same amount *plus* the district per-pupil allotment for special education (this is further explained in section 5.2). For both special education and non-special education, funding levels are based on the previous year's enrollment. Local districts are required to make payments to charter schools in 12 equal monthly installments. Charter schools may appeal to the Secretary of Education if the district fails to make timely payments. The Secretary may then withhold the amount of the missing payment from state payments to the district.

In terms of total operating revenues, charter schools received $7,794 per pupil in the 1999-00 school year. This is $461 less than the per-pupil rate for the districts in which the charter schools lie (i.e., host districts). Because districts have other obligations and because they pay for such services as transportation for charter school students, this difference is not large.

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[2] The link to this Web site is <www.ses.standardandpoors.com>.

Table 5:1 Mean Per Pupil Operating Revenue by Source

	All Charter Schools		*All Host Districts*	
	1999-00	*% of Total Revenues*	*1999-00*	*% of Total Revenues*
Local	$6,046	77.6%	$4,285	51.9%
Intermediate	$229	2.9%	$49	0.6%
State	$513	6.6%	$3,308	40.1%
Federal	$658	8.4%	$292*	3.5%
Private	$304	3.9%	$11	0.1%
Other Operating Revenue	$44	0.6%	$310	3.8%
Total Operating Revenue ($ Per Student)	$ 7,794	100%	$ 8,255	100%

Source: The data were obtained from the Standard and Poors' Web site.

* It is important to note that the figure for federal funds for host districts is an average across all districts that granted charters in 1999-00. This figure would be higher if we weighted it based on the number of schools each district has chartered since Philadelphia receives more federal funds than other districts and has granted most of the charters.

Note: Three charter schools were dropped from the analysis since their revenues included resources devoted to residential programs or stipends paid to students. These schools include Ridgeview Academy Charter School, with $15,355 in revenues in 1999-00; Youth Build Philadelphia Charter School with $18,493; and Crispus Attucks Youthbuild Charter School, $29,490.

As noted earlier, most of the charter school revenues come from local districts. Sending districts pay for each of their students that enrolls in a charter school. In a sense, the original source of much of this funding is largely from the state, since the local districts receive 40 percent of their own revenues from the state.

After transfers from sending school districts, the next largest source of revenue for charter schools is federal funds. The mean charter school in Pennsylvania received approximately 8.4 percent of its revenues from federal sources, while local host districts received only 3.5 percent of their revenues from federal sources. The most common federal sources are Title I monies and grants from the Public Charter School Program, which are intended for planning and start-up purposes. The state is expected to receive $8.5 million from federal sources during the 2002 fiscal year for planning, start-up, and dissemination grants to charter schools.[3] During its first three years of operation, a charter school typically receives federal start-up funds equivalent to more than $800 per pupil. After its first three years of start-up funds, charter schools can apply for dissemination grants also originating from the federal Public Charter School Program.

Specific state grants account for 6.6 percent of the total charter school revenues, compared with 40 percent of the district revenues. Other sources of revenues include money from Intermediate Units or sources (2.9 percent of total revenues), private groups (3.9 percent) and other operating revenue (0.6 percent). While the difference in total revenues was only $461 per pupil, had the charter schools not compensated with private sources, the difference in revenues would have been $750 per pupil.

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[3] http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/10-2002/100702charter_school_grants.html

5.2 Special Education Funding

Funding of special education programs is a challenge for traditional public schools, as well as for charter schools. Additional resources often are needed for alternative curricular materials and adaptive technologies, as well as physical accommodations. Pennsylvania has been successful in securing relatively large amounts of start-up funds for charter schools and in having these resources sent to the schools in a timely fashion. Even so, many charter schools must deal with the lack of sufficient start-up and operational funds when faced with implementing expensive special education and related services. Although Pennsylvania charter schools are considered independent school districts or LEAs, they receive their special education funding from the child's district of residence, not directly from the state. The funds received are determined using a formula that may not always provide charter schools with sufficient reimbursement for the cost of special education services.

Specifically, the funding that charter schools receive for students who qualify for special education equals the amount provided to the students' district of residence for nonspecial education students plus an amount determined by dividing the district of residence total special education reported costs for the previous school year by 16 percent of the district of residence average daily membership for the previous year (PDE, 1999). For both special education and non-special education, funding levels are based on the previous year's enrollment.

Per-pupil funding amounts refer to a full 180 days or 900/990 hours school year and would be prorated for students who enrolled or were identified for services for less than a full year. Because the amount of money for each student with a disability is the same, schools that enroll only students with mild disabilities are likely to receive more resources than needed, while schools that enroll students with moderate or severe disabilities are likely to be underfunded.

CAOs at charter schools reported a mixed picture in terms of the amount of additional funds they received from local districts for the students receiving special education services. Some schools reported that they received sufficient funds for the additional services they provided, while others claimed that the funds were not sufficient. A few CAOs noted that the districts may be profiting from the students enrolled in special education at the charter school because the district was not passing on all resources they received for students with disabilities. While this may be true in a few cases, because a higher proportion of students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools have mild and more easily remediated disabilities (see chapter 10), it is likely that this formula for funding is more generous for charter schools than for the local districts.

5.3 Expenditure Patterns

Under Act 22, each charter school is considered a separate local education agency (LEA). As such, they are separate nonprofit entities with the authority to determine their own budgets and expenditure priorities. Given this relative fiscal autonomy, it is important to examine charter schools' spending patterns and whether they differ from those of other public schools. In short, what are Pennsylvania charter schools doing with their fiscal autonomy? Before focusing on spending priorities, however, we will examine the total amount charter schools spend.

Table 5:2 shows that the median charter school spent $7,536 per pupil during the 1999-00 school year. While 1 cyber school reported spending only $3,100 per pupil, most schools spent between $5,000 and $10,000 per pupil. Two schools spent between $13,000 and $16,000 per pupil, and the 2 Youth Build charter schools, which pay stipends to students that work on construction projects, reported spending more than $28,000 per pupil. During the 2000-01 school year, the median charter school spent $7,881 per pupil. Three schools spent less than $5,000 per pupil, and 6 spent between $12,500 and $33,000 per pupil. As in the previous year, the bulk of the schools reported spending between $5,000 and $10,000 per pupil.

In order to interpret these numbers, however, we need a comparison group. The best readily available comparison is each charter school's host district. Since host districts exist in the same market for labor and other school services as their charter schools, we need not make adjustments for differences in cost of living. Table 5:2 shows that as a group, the median charter schools spent less per pupil than the median host districts. During the 2000-01 school year, the difference was $437 per pupil. During the previous year the difference was $344. We chose to use median expenditures rather than means because of the high proportion of extreme outliers among the charter schools. Using the mean, which is more sensitive to these outliers, we found that the mean for charter schools was actually slightly more (i.e., $20 per pupil) than the mean for host districts. Generally, the differences in expenditures between charter schools and host districts is not large.

Table 5:2 Charter School Per-Pupil Expenditures Compared With Host Districts

Schools	*Median 1999-00*	*Median 2000-01*	*Mean Expenditures for 2000-01*	*Standard Deviation of the Mean for 2000-01*
Charter Schools	$7,536	$7,881	$8,700	$4,815
Host Districts	$7,880	$8,318	$8,680	$1,331
Charter School minus Host District	-344*	-437*	+20	

Source: School Profiles data provided by PDE.

The estimates in Table 5:2, however, do not allow us to assess whether charter schools and host districts have comparable student bodies and, therefore, comparable demands on their resources. For instance, some charter schools might have a higher concentration of special needs students than their host districts. One must also bear in mind that charter schools must absorb any number of start-up costs (not the least of which is facilities) that their host districts do not. Hence, to say that they spend approximately the same amount per pupil as their host districts might imply that they use their resources more efficiently than host districts. Efficiency, however, involves the relationship between fiscal (and other) input and various student outcomes. In the next year, we intend to explore this issue further.

Beyond the total amount of expenditures per pupil, the most important characteristic of a school's overall expenditure patterns is the proportion of its funds spent on instruction versus other functions. In order to estimate the percentage of charter school expenditures devoted to instruction, we examined data on school expenditures included in the school profiles for the 2000-01 school year, which is the most recent data currently available. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 5:3.[4] We found tremendous variation among charter schools. Some charter schools, for instance, reported spending less than 40 percent of their total expenditures on instructional items, while others indicated that they spent more than 90 percent on such items. One school reported spending 100 percent of its total expenditures on instructional items.[5]

Table 5:3 Percentage of Total Expenditures Devoted to Instruction, 2000-01

Group	*Mean*	*Median*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
Charter Schools	54.1%	53.6%	24.2%	94.6%
Host Districts	59.7%	59.7%	35.7%	68.7%
All Pennsylvania Public Schools	57.2%	57.8%	24.2%	94.6%

Source: School Profiles data provided by PDE.
Note: One charter school reported 100 percent expenditures on instruction. Because this is highly unlikely, we did not include this as the maximum for this group. We did, however, include this figure when calculating the mean and median.

Taken as a group, the average charter school spent 54 percent of its total 2000-01 expenditures on instructional items. The mean value for all Pennsylvania public schools, by comparison, was 57 percent, while the mean value for all host districts was almost 60 percent. Taken as a group charter schools spent fewer of their resources on instructional items than other noncharter public schools[6] (this is discussed further in the following pages).

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[4] Throughout the report, we use expenditure category definitions as set out by PDE. "Instructional" expenditures include the following subcategories: regular elementary and secondary programs, special elementary and secondary programs, vocational education programs, other elementary and secondary instructional programs, adult education programs, and community and junior college education programs. Essentially, instructional expenditures include salaries and instructional materials.

[5] Such variations raise questions about how consistently accounting categories are applied from one charter school to the next. Some charter schools appear to have limited human resources for budgeting and other administrative functions. Unfortunately, we have no way to independently verify the data that schools report.

Table 5:4 provides a detailed breakout of operating expenditures for the 1999-00 school year.[7] Because of difficulties in working with and aggregating data from the Annual Financial Reports, we relied on data reported on the Standard and Poors' school evaluation services Web site. Unfortunately, the most recent year of expenditure data they have is for the 1999-00 school year. We aggregated the results for all charter schools. Three charter schools that were deemed to be outliers were left out of the analysis since they were spending more than two or three times the amount the other schools spent due to their special populations of students. For a comparison group, we aggregated the results for the host districts.

Table 5:4 Per-Pupil Operating Expenditures for Charter Schools and Host Districts by Function, 1999-00

	Charter Schools		*Host Districts*	
	Total for 1999-00	*Percent of Expenditures*	*Total for 1999-00*	*Percent of Expenditures*
Instruction	$4,180	54.7%	$4,819	63.5%
Instructional Support	$472	6.2%	$540	7.1%
Administration	$1,656	21.7%	$659	8.7%
Operations & Maintenance	$1,103	14.4%	$717	9.5%
Transportation	$71	0.9%	$406	5.4%
Food Services	$103	1.3%	$289	3.8%
Student Activities	$21	0.3%	$116	1.5%
Other	$41	0.5%	$39	0.5%
Total Operating Expenditures	$7,647	100%	$7,585	100%

Source: The data were obtained from the Standard and Poors' Web site.

Based on this data source and this particular year of data, the charter schools were actually spending $63 per pupil more than host districts on operating costs. Just as we found with the 2000-01 data earlier in this section, the charter schools were spending less on instruction and instructional support than host districts. At the same time, the charter schools were devoting substantially more of their resources to administration, operations, and maintenance. The charter schools higher expenditures on administration is due—in part—to economies of scale. The higher proportion of spending on operations and maintenance is likely due to the fact that many of the charter schools are still in the start-up phase and are compelled to devote more resources for equipment and facilities.

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[6] Even though charter schools, on average, are spending less on instructional items than other noncharter public schools, our analysis of the Annual Financial Reports for 1998-99 indicated that 26 percent of the schools operational at that time reported spending a higher proportion of their total expenditures on instruction than their respective host districts.

[7] Total Operating Expenditures does not include debt service and capital outlay funds. If we include these, the host districts spend $1,100 more than charter schools. The host districts, on average, were spending $730 per pupil on debt expenditures and just under $600 per pupil on capital expenditures compared with $82 and $69, respectively, for the average charter school.

Another item of interest is that host districts are spending $406 per pupil for transportation, compared with $71 per pupil for the charter schools. Host districts, according to the law, must provide transportation for charter school students within their district. In most cases, the host district simply provides the requested transportation. In some cases, the charter schools have requested and received from the host district the money that the state pays out for transportation. In at least two Philadelphia schools we were informed by charter school administrators that the schools receive more from the district for transportation than they actually spend on providing the transportation themselves. This was possible because the charter schools were, reportedly, not providing the extensive transportation services that would have been provided by the district.

Because the traditional public schools are more likely to have extracurricular activities as well as athletic programs in the high schools, it was not surprising to find that they were spending more on student activities ($116 per pupil) than were the charter schools ($21 per pupil).

Table 5:5 breaks out the per-pupil expenditures by object. While host districts devoted 72 percent of their expenditures for compensation (i.e., salaries and benefits) for employees, the charter schools devoted only 52 percent of their total expenditures on salaries and benefits. This large difference may be partially explained by the higher proportion of charter school expenditures used for purchased services. Purchased services for charter schools operated by for-profit education management organizations (EMOs) are likely to include salary and benefits for some employees working at the school. Another partial explanation for the difference in expenditures on compensation is likely to be due to the large differences in salaries paid to charter school teachers compared with teachers in the host districts. On average the host districts paid $16,600 more to classroom teachers than did the charter schools (more details on teachers' salaries are found in chapter 8).

Table 5:5 Per Pupil Expenditures by Object, 1999-00

	Charter Schools		*Host Districts*	
	Total for 1999-00	*Percent of Expenditures*	*Total for 1999-00*	*Percent of Expenditures*
Compensation	$3,999	52.3%	$5,495	72.4%
Purchased Services	$2,445	32.0%	$1,479	19.5%
Supplies and Materials	$1,135	14.8%	$558	7.4%
Other	$69	0.9%	$53	0.7%
Total Operating Expenditures	$7,648	100%	$7,585	100%

Source: The data were obtained from the Standard and Poors' Web site.

Another perspective on comparing expenditures between charter schools and their host districts would be to examine expenditures by academic program. Table 5:6 breaks out the total expenditures devoted to instruction (note that this is not total expenditures, but only expenditures devoted to instruction) according to a complete range of academic programs. The most noteworthy differences were in spending on special education and career and technical education, where the host districts spent substantially more than charter schools.

Table 5:6 Per-Pupil Expenditures on Instruction, by Academic Program, 1999-00

	Charter Schools		*Host Districts*	
	Total for 1999-00	*Percent of Expenditures*	*Total for 1999-00*	*Percent of Expenditures*
Basic K-12 Education	$4,034	96.5%	$3,664	76.0%
Summer School	$3	0.1%	$5	0.1%
Special Education	$143	3.4%	$857	17.8%
Early Intervention	0	0.0%	$12	0.2%
Career & Technical Ed.	0	0.0%	$258	5.4%
Alternative Education	0	0.0%	$23	0.5%
Other	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total Expenditures devoted to Instruction	$4,180	100%	$4,819	100%

Source: The data were obtained from the Standard and Poors' Web site.

The findings outlined in the preceding pages, raise two interrelated questions. First, why do charter schools as a group devote a smaller share of their total expenditures to instructional items? Second, why is there such wide variation *among* charter schools? We begin with the first question.

One partial answer to the first question is that, as start-up organizations, charter schools must bear many one-time and fixed costs (e.g., renting and/or renovating facilities) that established districts have either covered in the past or have spread out over time by means of capital budgets. Further the charter school law does not permit charter schools to take on long-term debt (see 24 P.S. §17-1714-A(a)(6)). Therefore the cost of renovating facilities must be paid from current revenues. The fact that charter schools spend less on instructional items is not necessarily an indication of inefficiency or waste. Rather, it is partially related to the relatively high and fixed start-up costs associated with founding a new school. While the available data did not allow us to fully explore this issue, we did find that host districts were spending more on debt expenditures [8] ($730 per pupil compared with only $82 for the average charter school in 1999-00) and more on capital expenditures[9] ($597 per pupil compared with $69 per pupil for charter schools). On the other hand, charter schools were spending more on operations and maintenance[10] than host districts ($1,103 per pupil compared with $717 per pupil for host districts). This latter finding provides some evidence that instructional expenditures are "crowded out" in charter schools to a certain degree by the need to cover start-up and other related expenses. Another possible explanation is that charter schools typically pay their teachers less than other similar schools (see Chapter 8). This, in turn, would reduce the demand on their instructional budgets. We emphasize, however, that this is only a preliminary answer to the question and that it deserves further attention.

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[8] Debt expenditures refer to principal and interest payments on borrowed funds or other obligations. This also includes all debt-related expenditures including the debt service fund and debt expenditures in the operating funds.

5.4 Fiscal Viability

For charter schools to operate successfully in the long run, they must be fiscally viable. While it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a full fiscal audit of Pennsylvania charter schools, we examined a number of indicators related to fiscal viability. First, in our 2000 report, we examined charter schools' capacity to develop and execute budgets by looking at variances between budgeted and actual revenues and expenditures. This was based on an analysis of annual financial reports for the 1998-99 school year. Second, we examined indicators of financial margins and reserves for charter schools and their host districts using the data organized by Standard and Poors.[11]

In order to provide a composite picture of schools' capacity to budget, we calculated the variance between budgeted and actual revenues and between budgeted and actual expenditures in 1998-99 based on the annual financial reports. High variances can cast doubt on a school's ability to effectively plan and execute educational and organizational strategies. In operational terms, a revenue variance is the amount of funds actually received minus the amount the school budgeted for. The same holds true for expenditures. In order to facilitate comparisons among high- and low-budget schools, we converted these variances into percentages of the total revenues (expenditures) budgeted for. Thus, for instance, a revenue variance of 20 percent means that the school received revenues that were 20 percent higher than those budgeted for, whereas a revenue variance of -20 percent means that the school received revenues that were 20 percent less than those budgeted for. Naturally, it is better for schools to have positive variances in revenue and negative variances in expenditures.

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[9] Capital expenditures refer to the fund in which expenditures are recorded. Capital project expenditures may include expenditures for land, buildings, improvements to land and buildings, and equipment. Capital outlays, which may be recorded in the general fund, include classroom furniture, computers, audiovisual equipment, and fixtures. While Act 22 prohibits charter schools from using public funds to construct new facilities, they may use other funds to do so [24 P.S. §17-1722-A(c)].

[10] Operations and maintenance expenditures refer to spending on activities concerned with keeping the school system's physical plant open, comfortable, and safe for use and its grounds, buildings, and equipment in an effective working condition and state of repair. Utility expenditures, such as electricity, heating, telephone, water, wastewater, and trash disposal are also included. Capital outlay and debt service are not included.

[11] We used the same subset of charter schools as for the analysis of revenues and expenditures earlier in this chapter. This excluded three schools with revenues and spending patterns that were unique from the others because of the residential nature of one of the schools and the spending on student stipends at the other two schools.

On the revenue side, the median school received 1.7 percent more than it budgeted for. Thus, taken as a group, the first group of Pennsylvania charter schools budgeted conservatively and received more than expected. On the expenditure side, Pennsylvania charter schools in 1998-99 appear to have been similarly conservative. Indeed, the median charter school spent 11.3 percent less than it budgeted for. As with many of the other fiscal variables discussed in this chapter, there was great variation among charter schools. In sum, the first group of Pennsylvania charter schools appeared to be doing a remarkably good job of budgeting, both on the revenue and expenditure sides of the fiscal equation. Readers should bear in mind, however, that these data are now quite dated and represent only one year of expenditures.

The ability to accurately anticipate revenues and expenditures in the budgeting process should enable charter schools to avoid running deficits. Given that the 30 charter schools operating in 1998-99 appeared to do a good job of budgeting, we expected that few, if any, would run deficits. Examination of charter schools' 1998-99 annual financial reports (AFRs) revealed that the median balance for all charter schools was $84,380, or 11.4 percent of total expenditures. However, there was significant variation among schools. Seven of the 30 schools (23 percent) we examined showed negative end-of-year balances, the largest of which was more than $400,000, or 10.7 percent of that school's total expenditures. On the positive side, some schools showed positive balances of up to 58 percent of their total expenditures for the year. Thus, while most charter schools appeared to be fiscally healthy in the 1998-99 school year, a few schools were struggling.

General fund margin. In terms of the general fund margin, which reflects the relationship between revenues and expenditures and determines if a school or district's operations are balanced, we found that the charter schools had only $17 per pupil in 1999-00 while host districts had a general fund balance of $258 per pupil. Table 5:7 contains a number of indicators related to financial margins and reserves as well as the financial position of charter schools and host districts.

Financial position. The financial position provides one of the best measures of a school's or districts' financial viability. The financial position is measured by its fund balance, which is defined as its assets minus its liabilities and reservations or its revenues minus expenditures after transfers. The fund balance is an important indicator of a school's ability to provide services during lean times or when faced with decreasing revenues.

General fund balance and current position. On average, the charter schools had an unreserved general fund balance of $208,451 in 1999-00. The average current position[12] of charter schools was $212,316. This is equivalent to $962 per pupil, which is higher than for host districts (i.e., $797 per pupil).

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[12] Current position refers to a measure that is used to assess the liquidity of a district. It is calculated by subtracting general fund liabilities and deferred revenue from general fund assets.

Table 5:7 Summary of Indicators Related to Financial Viability: Financial Margins, Financial Reserves, and Financial Position for 1999-00

	Charter Schools	*Host Districts*
Financial Margin Indicators		
Operating Margin ($ per pupil)	$148	$669
General Fund Margin ($ per pupil)	$17	$258
Financial Reserve Indicators		
Unreserved Operating Fund Balance ($ per pupil)	$912	$807
Unreserved Operating Fund Balance/Operating Expenditures (%)	16.1%	10.7%
Unreserved General Fund Balance ($ per pupil)	$911	$700
Unreserved General Fund Balance/General Fund Expenditures (%)	16.1%	9.1%
Financial Position Indicators		
Current Position ($ per pupil)	$962	$797
Current Position/General Fund Expenditures (%)	16.7%	10.4%

Source: The data were aggregated from school-level reports obtained from the Standard and Poors' School Evaluation Services Web site.

These indicators suggest that charter schools operating in 1999-00, on the whole, have positively balanced budgets and have demonstrated that they are financially viable. Relative to their host districts, the average charter school has been more successful in establishing positive operating and general fund balances and maintaining a larger and more positive current position.

5.5 Summary and Conclusions

Like other school choice policies, Act 22 mandates that funding follows students. Thus, schools have a financial incentive to work to satisfy students and their parents. Under the terms of the Act, this funding is funneled through local districts that send students to charter schools. The size of the district subsidy is based on the sending districts' per-pupil expenditure for its own students and differs for special education and non-special-education students.

The first section of the chapter examined sources of charter schools' revenue using data aggregated from school reports on the Standard and Poors' School Evaluation Services Web site. We estimate that the mean charter school received approximately 77 percent of its total revenues from districts during the 1999-00 school year (this is, of course, largely state money that is channeled through the districts to the charter schools). There is, however, a large amount of variation among charter schools. Next to district transfers, the largest revenue source for charter schools is the federal government, mostly through Title I monies and special charter school grants. While there is considerable school-by-school variation, the mean charter school received 8.4 percent of its total revenues from the federal government. The remainder of charter school revenues came from the state, Intermediate Units, or private sources.

An important policy issue follows from the fact that the typical charter school relies on non-district sources for approximately one-quarter of its total revenue. From one point of view, such reliance on nondistrict sources is good inasmuch as it tends to favor schools that bring a great deal of organizational, fiscal, and social capital to the table. In this view, these schools are more likely to realize some of the major goals of privatization—to leverage community resources so that governments can do less with more and to build a sense of collective responsibility for schools and students. From another perspective, charter schools' reliance on non-district sources is worrisome, since it raises questions about the sustainability and scalability of the reform. There are, after all, a limited number of organizations willing and able to sponsor charter schools. Foundations and other charitable organizations, moreover, are often more sanguine about providing start-up monies than about covering long-term operating expenses. This dependency on external funds might be especially troubling, from this point of view, if charter schools must use them for operating costs as well as one-time start-up expenses. Thus, what at first blush appears to be a strength of many Pennsylvania charter schools might turn out to place limits on the range of charter-related choices available to students. Ultimately, resolution of this debate depends on how efficiently charter schools are spending their revenues.

The third section of the chapter examined charter schools' expenditure patterns. We estimate that charter schools spent approximately the same amount per pupil as their host districts during 2000-01. Of that total amount, we found that charter schools typically spend a smaller percentage on instructional items than their host districts and a large percentage on administration and operations and maintenance. The reasons for these differences in expenditure patterns might lie more in the exigencies of starting new schools (e.g., acquiring and maintaining physical facilities) than in any inherent inefficiency in charter schools. However, these are questions that can be answered only with the passage of more time.

The final section of the chapter examined charter schools' fiscal viability. First, from data for the first 30 charter schools we found indications that they appeared to be relatively conservative in budgeting, taking in more than expected on the revenue side and spending less than expected on the expenditure side of the ledger. Second, we examined charter schools' margins, financial reserves, and financial position for 1999-00 and compared these with the host districts of charter schools. We found that the charter schools' average per-pupil unreserved general fund balance was higher than that of the charter host districts. Relative to their host districts, the average charter school has been more successful in establishing positive operating and general fund balances and maintaining a larger and more positive current position. These indicators suggest that charter schools operating in 1999-00 demonstrated that they were financially viable.

Chapter Six
Student and Family Characteristics:

In this chapter we present charter students' characteristics and compare them with those of noncharter students. We also present information on the families of charter school students. The charter concept (like all policies) makes certain assumptions about the behavior and attitudes of its target population (students and families). Questions we will address include the following:

- ☐ How do charter students' and families' background characteristics compare with those of noncharter students and families, particularly in the host district?
- ☐ What kinds of schools did students attend before coming to the charter school?
- ☐ How much student turnover is there in charter schools?
- ☐ Why did students and their families choose their charter school?
- ☐ Are students and parents aware of the school's mission?

6.1 Sampling of Students and Parents

Student Sample

For the purpose of this study, a sample of students completed questionnaires in 3 different school years: 1998-99, 1999-00, and 2001-02. Only students in grades 5 and above were included in the surveys. Twenty-three schools and 923 students were included in the 1998-99 sample (8 of the 31 schools were not included in 1999 since they did not have any students enrolled in grade 5 or higher). In the second sampling during spring 2000, 25 of the original 31 schools and a total of 1,106 students were included in the sample (only 5 schools were not included in 2000 because they did not provide instruction at grade 5 and above; also, one school was closed after the 1999-00 school year). The third round of sampling was the most comprehensive covering 62 schools [1] and including 2,519 students.

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[1] In total, we collected survey data from 76 schools. Eleven schools did not enroll students above grade 5 so they did not complete the student survey. Due to scheduling problems, 2 schools with students in grades 5-12 were not sampled: Freire C.S. and Village C. S. of Chester-Upland. One cyber charter, PA Learners Online Regional CS, was sampled, but we did not receive any responses.

All students were targeted in the selected classes, but a number of students were either absent or not present during the administration of the surveys and were not included. The response rate, which was calculated on the number of students who completed the surveys in the sampled classes, was high for all 3 samples (90.4 percent in 1999, 90.3 percent in 2000, and 83.3 percent in 2002). We had rather low response rates for the cyber schools, especially in the 2002 sample. This was due to difficulties in corresponding with students who had to be sampled though the mail.

The aim of the sampling was to select at least 3 classes and at least 40 students at each school. In some cases the number of students was less than 40. In these cases, we sampled all the students enrolled at the school in grade 5 and above. To the extent possible, an effort was made to select classes instructed by different teachers who represented different grades and subject areas. Only classes required by most/all students at a particular grade level were sampled in order to avoid selection bias.

All members of the evaluation team received a handbook with instructions and support materials for the data collection before the work started. Members of the evaluation team administered the surveys to students. Evaluation team members read general instructions and then explained the items that some students typically have trouble with. For classes in grades 5 and 6, the survey administrator read through the whole survey, item by item, as the students completed the work. Additionally, in-service training was provided to new members of the evaluation team before they administered surveys to students on their own.

Parent Sample

Depending on the size of the school, between 25 and 35 parents from each school were randomly selected during a visit by a member of the evaluation team in May 1999, in the spring of 2000, and the spring of 2002. The random sample of families was drawn from a roster of all students. Survey packages containing a cover letter, questionnaire, and a return envelope were prepared for each selected family. In 1999 and 2000 each charter school was encouraged to prepare and include its own cover letter in order to make the contact with the families more familiar. In 2002 representatives from the charter school were asked to contact each parent receiving a survey to encourage participation. The questionnaires were mailed directly to the families by the evaluation team. Upon completion, the questionnaires were returned to the evaluation team by mail in addressed, postage paid envelopes; and the name of the family was checked off the list to denote that the survey was completed and returned. A summary of the disaggregated results for each school was returned to each school after the data analysis was completed.

This component of the evaluation was optional during the first year because there was not sufficient time for follow-up before the close of the school year. Two dollars were enclosed with each survey. As many as three follow-up surveys were sent to some families and, in some schools, as many as four follow-up calls were made to nonresponding families. The effort put into the follow-up increased the overall response rate, even though the response rate was below our anticipated goal.

In 1999, 11 schools did not conduct parent surveys or were unable to obtain a sufficient response rate to have their parent responses included in the state totals. The overall response rate was 50.6 percent in the 1999 sample. In 2000, 5 schools did not receive a sufficient response rate and were not included in the totals for the state. Altogether, the response rate was 46.8 percent. In 2002, we received satisfactory response rates for parent surveys from 67 of 76 schools. The 9 schools that were dropped from the analysis either returned no surveys or had an insufficient response rate to be included. More details on sampling is found in chapter 2.

Typically, a 40 percent response rate has been used as a cutoff point for decisions about including schools in the total sample. A number of schools had parent response rates between 20 percent and 40 percent. If the school had a large number of families targeted to start with and if the distribution of results did not exhibit any noticeable differences from the remainder of the schools, we decided to include them. Within these 67 schools with satisfactory response rates in 2002, a total of 1,949 families were targeted; and we received surveys from 863 parents or guardians. Appendix B includes specific information about the survey results for students and Appendix C includes specific information about the survey results for parents.

6.2 Description of Charter School Students and Families

In this section, we describe the students enrolled in the charter schools. We relied on a variety of sources, including data reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Education by the charter schools. Other sources of data included the annual reports prepared by the charter schools and the students and parents who took part in our sample.

For the 2001-02 school year, enrollment in Pennsylvania charter schools was 28,576 students. This is a rapid increase from the 1,179 students that were enrolled in the first year of the reform (1997-98) and just under 20,000 in 2000-01. Chapter 3 contains more specific information about the growth of the charter school reform in terms of the number of schools and enrolled students.

Grade and Age of Students

Students taking part in the survey were rather evenly divided between the middle and high school levels as well across the specific grade levels. Over the three samples, there was generally a shift to the lower grades. Figure 6:1 depicts the distribution of sampled students by grade from all three years. The students ranged from 9-20 years in age. They were rather evenly distributed by age, although the majority of the students fell between the ages of 11 and 16. Only 75 students were between the ages of 18 and 20. The average age of the students sampled in 1999 and 2000 was 13.8 years, but in 2002 this dropped to 13.2 years.

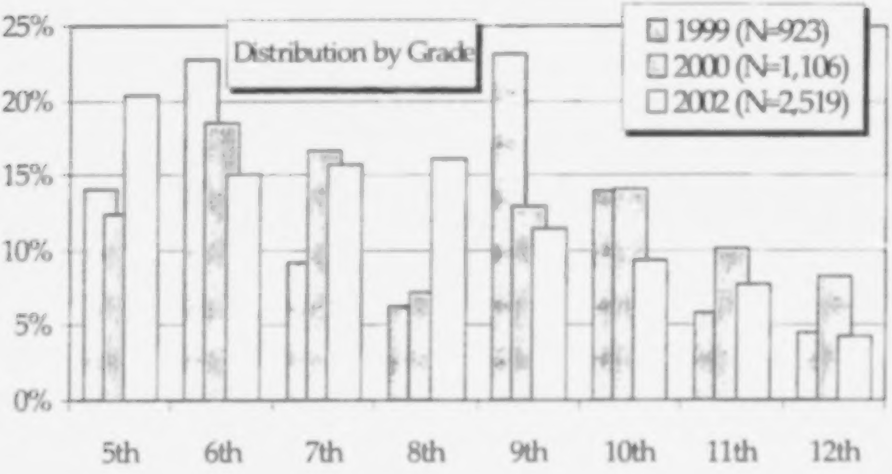

Figure 6:1 Distribution of Sampled Students by Grade

The children of the sampled parents were rather evenly distributed across the various grade levels, although grades 11 and 12 were underrepresented. Over 62 percent of the parents had children enrolled at the elementary level, 19.4 percent had children enrolled at the middle school level, and parents with students enrolled at the high school level accounted for 18.3 percent of all parents returning a questionnaire (an average of 4.8 percent at each grade level, 9-12).

Figure 6:2 illustrates the distribution of enrollment by grades according to official enrollment data. This bar chart illustrates that the largest proportion of students are enrolled in lower elementary and that upper secondary has the fewest.

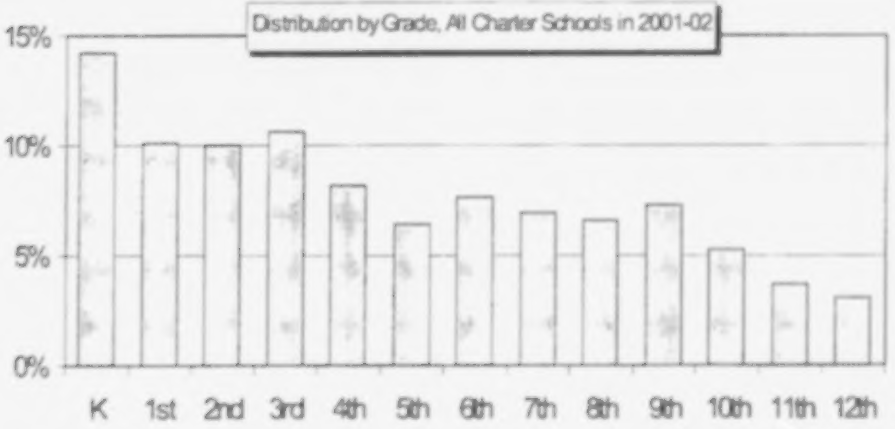

Figure 6:2 Distribution of All Pennsylvania Charter School Students by Grade

Gender

Students were fairly evenly distributed by gender, with 51.9 percent females and 48.1 percent males. It is interesting to point out, however, that there was considerable variance among schools. Some schools had high proportions of either males or females, depending on the nature and profile of the school.

Ethnicity

Minorities, which account for just under 75 percent of the sampled charter school enrollments, are highly represented in Pennsylvania's charter schools. Among the sampled students the largest group by race were blacks with 54.9 percent, followed by whites with 25.1 percent, Hispanics with 14.1 percent, Native Americans with 4.8 percent, and Asian/Pacific Islanders with 1.2 percent.

Figure 6:3 illustrates the breakdown of sampled students and parents by race and ethnicity and highlights differences between these samples and the officially reported figures for all students in the 77 charter schools that were operating in 2001-02.

Because the charter schools are highly concentrated in urban areas, and particularly in Philadelphia, we expected a large proportion of students from minority backgrounds. In contrast, the *National Study of Charter Schools Report* (RPP, 2000) gives the demographic breakdown for charter schools nationally with 48.2 percent white, 23.5 percent black, 21.1 percent Hispanic, 3.4 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.6 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1.2 percent other. From these figures we can see that Pennsylvania charter schools are attracting more minorities than are charter schools in other states. Chapter 10 examines issues related to equity and access and will provide a more detailed analysis of differences between charter and noncharter public schools in terms of race, family income, and ability.

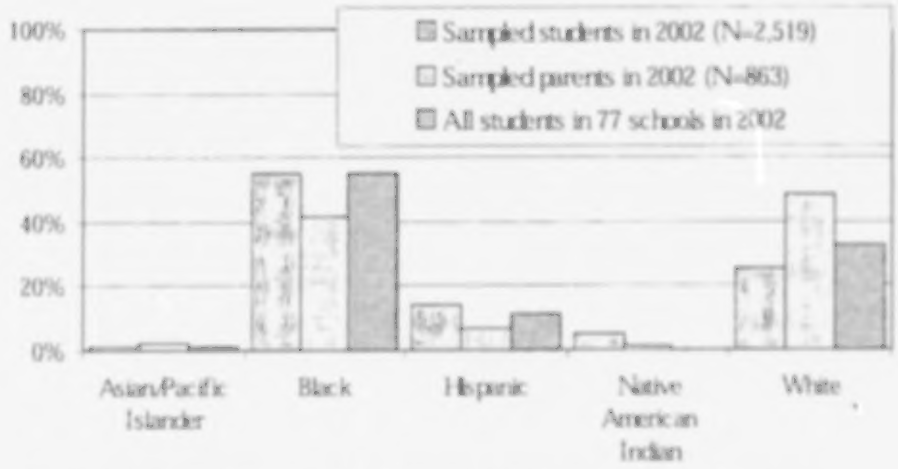

Figure 6:3 Distribution of All Charter School Students and Sampled Students and Parents by Race/Ethnicity, 2001-02

While the student sample included only schools that had at least one class between grades 5 and 12, the parent sample included all schools, even those with only lower elementary grades. More than 86 percent of the parents responding were female.

Ideally, the proportion of minority parents in the parent sample should reflect the proportion of enrolled students. Figure 6.2 illustrates that the sample of parents had more white families and fewer minority families than the sample of students. The differences could be due to the fact that the minority families have more siblings enrolled in the charter schools; thus, the proportion of minority families is not as high as the proportion of minority students. Another partial explanation is that the schools excluded due to a low response rate had a considerably higher proportion of minority students than the 67 schools included in this component of the study. It is also possible that the minority families were underrepresented in the sample because a higher proportion of them did not complete and return the survey. It is important to point out that, although a few schools have a high proportion of parents who do not have English or Spanish as their first language, the parent survey was made available in English and Spanish only.

Family Income and Family Type

In chapter 10 we examine in detail variables related to family income. To summarize some of the main findings, we can state that about 55 percent of the students enrolled in charter schools qualify for free and reduced lunch, compared with 53 percent in the host districts. Of course, there were considerable differences among the charter schools, with some having substantially higher proportions of students qualifying for FRL and others with substantially fewer students qualifying for FRL than their respective host districts. Comparison of average household income provides another way to examine the distribution of students in charter schools. The annual family income reported by the sampled parents in 2002 indicated that about 73 percent had annual family incomes between $20,000 and $100,000, with 7 percent of the families having incomes over $100,000.

Sixty-five percent of the families were in two-parent homes in 2002, while 33.6 percent were in single parent homes and 1.4 percent lived in other types of households (e.g., student living with other relatives or residing in state facility). This variable also shifted between 2000 and 2002. For example, the percent of two-parent families with children enrolled in charter schools jumped from 57 percent in 2000 to 65 percent in 2002.

Highest Level of Education Charter School Students Plan to Complete

The students were asked about the highest level of education they planned to complete: high school, 2 years of college, 4 years of college, graduate school, and not sure yet. These categories were explained to the students, and examples of careers requiring the specific level of schooling were provided. In 2002, 5 percent of the sampled students expected to stop their schooling after high school, while

10 percent planned to complete a 2-year degree, 30 percent planned to complete a 4-year degree, and approximately 37 percent planned to go on to graduate school, which was explained to the students to include training after the bachelors degree that included a masters, doctoral, or professional degree. Not surprisingly, nearly a fifth of the students were still not sure about their future school/training plans beyond high school.

Level of Parents' Formal Education

The level of formal education of the sampled parents in 2002 varied considerably. Slightly more than 7 percent indicated that they had not completed high school; 27.6 percent of the parents ended their formal schooling after graduating from high school; 33.9 percent completed less than 4 years of college; 14.4 percent obtained a bachelors degree; 6.3 percent had a BA plus some graduate courses; and 10.6 percent, a slight increase from 2000, completed a graduate or professional degree.

Length of Enrollment at Charter School

Twenty-two percent of the students in 2002 reported that they had been enrolled in their charter school for 1 year or less, a logical decrease from 47 percent in 2000 and 88 percent in 1999. Fifteen percent of the sampled students had been enrolled for 2 years. Just over 30 percent of the students indicated that they were enrolled for 3 or more years, 21 percent indicated that they were enrolled for 4 years in their charter school, and 10 percent indicated that they were enrolled for 5 years. Since the charter school reform is only 5 years old, the maximum number of years a student could be enrolled in a charter school in 2002 was 5 years. However, some students reported being enrolled for more than 5 years since their schools were conversion charter schools.

Previous School Attended

More than 75 percent of the sampled students in the Pennsylvania charter schools reported that they had previously attended public schools. Of the remaining 25 percent, 19 percent attended either a private or a parochial school, and 1 percent were home schooled. The remaining students either did not attend school, attended some other form of school, or did not respond to the question. The proportion of students transferring from private/parochial to charter schools increased from 16 percent in 1999 to 17.4 percent in 2000 and to 18.7 percent in 2002. Because our sample includes only students in grades 5-12, and because a larger proportion of students move from private schools in the lower elementary grades, it is likely that our sample underestimates the proportion of students moving from private/parochial schools to charter schools. It is also important to point out that the actual proportion of the students that were previously homeschooled is likely to be much higher than what is reported since the response rates from students in the cyber schools was very poor.

The charter school enrollment of students who had not previously attended a public school represents an additional burden for the host school districts.

Districts must divert a portion of their resources to educate these students, yet the students do not represent a decrease the number of students left in the district. Representatives from the Philadelphia Public Schools indicated that students who move from nonpublic schools to charter schools represent a heavy financial burden on their budget. In 2000, 25 percent of the students enrolled in charter schools sponsored by the district moved from nonpublic schools. Our 2002 sample of students from Philadelphia indicated that 22 percent of the students enrolled in Philadelphia charter schools reported that they had previously attended nonpublic schools.[2] This was an increase from the 18.6 percent of students in 2000 and the 16.8 percent in 1999 who were previously enrolled in nonpublic schools.

Among the schools in our sample, there was considerable variation in terms of the types of schools from which the charter schools were attracting their students. While several charter schools have no students who previously attended a private/parochial school, 7 schools had 40 percent or more of their students coming from private/parochial schools. Except for Edison and former Advantage-run schools, the EMO-operated charter schools were more likely to have a high proportion of their students coming from private or parochial schools. Two Philadelphia schools operated by Nobel, for example, had approximately 40 percent of their students reporting that they had previously attended a private or parochial school. The cyber schools also had a higher proportion of their students coming from nonpublic schools. Finally, it should be noted that the private conversion schools also tended to have a higher proportion of students report that they had previously attended a private school. Obviously, this is explained by the fact that a large portion of the students currently enrolled were also enrolled in the same school before it converted to a public charter school. The schools with high proportions of students coming from private or parochial schools are, in most cases, also the schools that have low proportions of minority students and low-income students.

Figure 6:4 illustrates the differences between our student and parent samples in terms of what they reported as the previous school attended. We have grouped these various categories into three areas: public school, nonpublic school, or other. The sample of parents covered grades K-12, while the sample of students covered grades 5-12. It is common that after the first year of charter school operation the largest group of new students is at the entry grade level for a particular school. A more detailed look at the parent responses indicates that 8 percent of the parents selected "other" because their child was just entering school in kindergarten and had not attended a school previously.

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[2] By contrast, the proportion of charter school students previously enrolled in private or parochial schools in the non-Philadelphia charter schools during 2002 was only 12 percent.

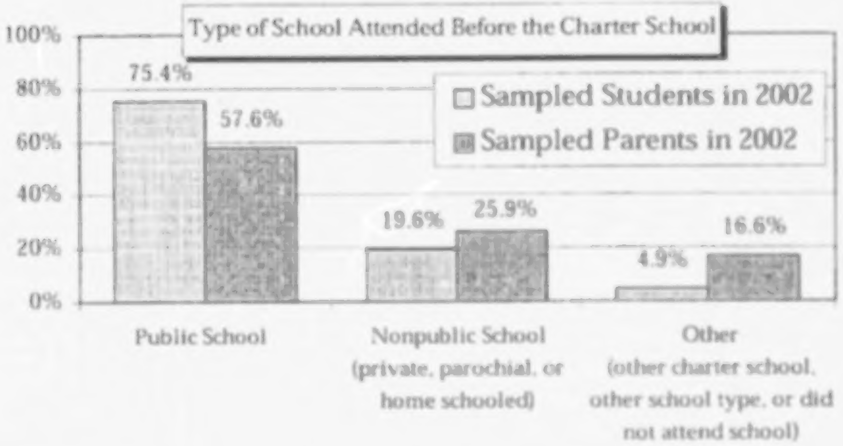

Figure 6:4 Type of School Attended Before Charter School: Responses from Sampled Students and Parents, 2002

The movement of students from nonpublic schools to charter schools results in local districts having to pay for educating children who previously were not enrolled in the public schools. We have seen in other states that the local districts report a large movement of students to charter schools in their first year of operation; but over time, the transfer of students back and forth between the charter school and the local school district equalizes (Horn & Miron, 2000). In reality, the number of students moving to the charter schools is still high because elementary-level charter schools will continue to enroll large groups of students at the kindergarten level. Since the local districts never enrolled these students, they do not appear in their records as transfers.

Stability/Mobility of Students

PDE collects data on all public schools regarding the stability of its student population. For each school year, schools and districts are asked to report the number of new students entering after the start of the school year and the number of students that left during the school year. Table 6:1 illustrates the aggregated results for charter schools, their host districts, as well as for the Commonwealth. In order to make comparisons between charter schools and host districts, we calculated the entering and withdrawal rates as a percentage of total enrollment in the same year. The results indicate very small differences in terms of the aggregate entering and withdrawal rates. There were, however, large differences across the schools with some schools reporting withdrawal rates below 1 percent and 1 school reporting that more than half of its students had withdrawn. In total, just over 10 percent of the charter school students were new, compared with 14 percent of the students in the host districts. More closely matched, 13.5 percent of the charter school students were withdrawing, compared with 15.3 percent of the students in host districts. Figures for the Commonwealth as a whole were considerably lower than for the charter schools and their host districts (see Figure 6:1).

Table 6:1 Median Stability Rates for Students Enrolled in Charter Schools and Host Districts

	Number Entering the School as a Percent of Total Enrollment	Number Withdrawing from the School as a Percent of Total Enrollment
Charter Schools	14.0%	15.3%
Host Districts	10.5%	13.5%
Pennsylvania	5.5%	6.4%

Note: Only 41 out of 77 school reported these data in 2001-02.

There are important limitations in the interpretation of the data. The first is that only 41 charter schools reported data. The second is that there are no codes or explanations for the reasons for withdrawal, so we cannot easily interpret the meaning of the data. Finally, the schools are in various states of implementation, so differences are bound to be related to the number of years a school is in operation. In 2001-02 , 36 percent of the sampled students indicated that they had been enrolled in the school for 1 year or less. This provides a good sense of just how young many of the schools are.

Amount of Time Volunteering at Charter Schools

Interestingly, 73.7 percent of parents reported that they either did not volunteer at school at all or volunteered to a very limited degree (i.e., 3 hours per month or less). A much smaller proportion of the parents reported volunteering quite extensively. Just under 12 percent of the parents volunteered between 4 and 6 hours per month, 3.2 percent volunteered between 7 and 9 hours per month, 3.1 percent volunteered between 10 and 12 hours, and 8.4 percent volunteered more than 12 hours per month. One would expect even more extensive parent involvement, since 49 percent of the parents believed that voluntary work was required at their charter school. The proportion of parents who believed voluntary work was required dropped from 52.7 percent in 2000. The level of volunteering in the schools was similar in 2000 and 2002, though the percentage of parents volunteering 10 or more hours a month nearly doubled.

Distance to Charter School

Surveyed parents reported that the average distance from home to the charter school was 5.6 miles in 2002 (it was 4.9 miles in 2002 and 4.3 in 1999), while the average distance to the nearest applicable traditional public school was 2.4 miles. Distance to the school should not be a large deterrent for parents, since transportation is supposed to be provided by local school districts in the same manner as transportation is provided to other schools in the district. Nevertheless, since some charter schools are still working out arrangements for transportation with the local districts, the considerably longer distance to the charter schools indicates a high level of commitment on the part of parents.

6.3 Reasons for Choosing Charter Schools: Responses From Sampled Students and Parents

Parents' Reasons for Choosing Their Charter School

In the most recent parent surveys, 89.8 percent reported that they were aware of the charter school's mission. Table 6:2 contains the rank-ordered reasons for choosing a charter school provided by our sample of 863 parents in 2002. The parents were asked to rate each factor on a 1 to 5 scale (1 = Not Important to 5 = Very Important) according to how important it was in choosing their charter school. The order and relative rating of the responses for the 1998-99 and 1999-00 school years differed very little from the 2001-02 sample of parents.

Table 6:2 Parents' Reasons for Choosing Their Charter School, Rank Ordered by Mean Scores, 2002

	Not important				*Very important*	*Mean*	*STD*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*		
Good teachers and high quality of instruction	1.6%	1.0%	8.8%	16.0%	72.7%	4.6	0.82
Safety for my child	2.6%	1.8%	6.9%	14.0%	74.6%	4.6	0.90
Academic reputation (high standards) of this sch'l	1.8%	2.2%	11.5%	24.5%	60.0%	4.4	0.90
I prefer the emphasis and educational philosophy of this school	2.3%	1.7%	11.3%	26.3%	58.4%	4.4	0.92
Promises made by charter school's spokespersons	7.8%	5.8%	17.2%	26.6%	42.6%	3.9	1.24
My interest in an educational reform effort	7.8%	8.6%	24.4%	23.5%	35.7%	3.7	1.25
I was unhappy with the curriculum and instruction at previous school	28.5%	5.1%	17.9%	12.8%	35.7%	3.2	1.64
My child wanted to attend this school	22.6%	7.5%	24.7%	16.5%	28.7%	3.2	1.50
My child has special needs that were not met at previous school	25.1%	11.1%	24.6%	11.9%	27.3%	3.1	1.52
Convenient location	31.1%	9.8%	18.6%	10.9%	29.7%	3.0	1.62
I prefer a private school but could not afford it	36.6%	7.6%	12.3%	12.2%	31.2%	2.9	1.71
My child was performing poorly at previous school	43.0%	7.3%	16.3%	10.4%	23.0%	2.6	1.64
Recommendations of teacher/official at my child's previous school	50.9%	9.5%	15.3%	7.8%	16.5%	2.3	1.54

As one can see from these survey results, some parents chose a charter school because of what they did not like at their local traditional public school, while others chose a charter school because of what was being promised. A number of state and national charter school studies suggest that the reasons parents choose a charter school are equivalent to what exists at the charter school. It is important, however, to distinguish between reasons for choosing and what actually exists at the charter school, especially since most of the parents chose their charter school before it was open and would have had limited information about the quality of instruction that would be offered. In order to differentiate between what parents expected and what the school actually provides, a portion of the parent questionnaire was designed to have parents rate their initial expectations and contrast this with what they currently perceived or were experiencing at the charter school. These findings are discussed further in Chapter 13, which deals with alternative indicators of process and market accountability.

According to the National Study of Charter Schools (RPP, 1998) parents choose charter schools because they are dissatisfied with the public schools and/or are attracted to charters. The predominant areas of parental dissatisfaction with public schools are (i) low academic expectations, (ii) poor instructional practices, (iii) environment and culture, (iv) safety, and (v) sense that parents are not welcome at school. The top six reasons parents were attracted to charter schools include the following: (i) nurturing environment, (ii) safe environment, (iii) value system, (iv) quality of academic program, (v) high standards for achievement, and (vi) small class size.

The 6 lowest rated factors, among the 20 options to which the parents could respond (based on a mean rating from 0 = feature not applicable, 1= not powerful to 5= very powerful), are as follows: (i) support for homeschooling, (ii) longer school year, (iii) focus on cultural/ethnic needs, (iv) extensive community service, (v) flexible school schedule, and (vi) services for disabled.

The findings from the national study are similar to what we have found in our Pennsylvania parent surveys. In particular, there is agreement with the high ranking of "quality of instruction," "safety," and "academic reputation" as factors instrumental in the choosing a charter school.

On our surveys parents were asked to list some other factors that motivated them to enroll their children in a charter school. The responses fell into four broad categories: (1) class size; (2) cultural issues; (3) teacher attitudes and relationships with parents and students; and (4) length of the school day and/or year.

Class size was mentioned most often. Parents indicated the desire for smaller class sizes, greater individual attention for students, and better behavior management. Examples of comments include, "The amount of children in the classrooms. Children can get more attention than in a class with 30 children"; "emphasis on behavior, smaller class sizes"; "very structured environment, with zero tolerance for [bad] behavior."

Cultural issues focused on teaching of cultural/ethnic customs as well as the inclusion of foreign language instruction. Examples of comments include "multicultural experience"; "I like the importance of educating children on African-American history"; "African-centered curriculum."

Teacher attitudes and relationships with parents and students revealed the importance that parents put on positive communication with school personnel and on knowing that teachers are taking a personal interest in their children. Examples of comments include "enthusiasm of founders and faculty"; "caring faculty and support staff"; "the staff really cares about the children"; "warm, caring teachers."

Length of school day/year was also mentioned as a motivation for choosing a charter school, particularly the availability of full-time kindergarten programs and extended number of school days. Examples of comments include "the school offers longer hours"; "the school year is longer"; "my nearest public school did not offer full-time kindergarten."

Student's Reasons for Choosing their Charter School

The majority of student respondents indicated that their parents' preference was the primary reason for choosing the charter school. Over 53 percent of the students rated as "Very Important" that their parents thought the charter school would be better for them. Following this was the item dealing with the perceived improved safety at the charter school. Though students ranked it the least important reason for choosing a charter school, friends have an important impact on parents' decisions. It is a matter of parent and student trust (Meister & Schuh, 2000).

An analysis of responses was conducted to compare the students in grades 5-8 and the students enrolled at the high school level. Large and significant differences existed for a few items. For example, students attending a charter high school were much more likely to cite the small school size or small class size as a reasons for choosing the school.

Two survey items dealt with the quality of the previous school the students attended: "Teachers at my previous school did not help me enough" and "I was not doing very well at the previous school." Important factors inducing families to choose alternatives to their local public schools are the poor quality of the local school or the lack of appropriate services for students. Nevertheless, only one of these two factors (teachers at previous school not helping enough) was highly rated as a reason for choosing the charter school among the sampled students.

The general pattern of responses from students regarding reasons for choosing their school was the same in all three years the surveys were administered. Table 6:3 shows the order in which students rated reasons for choosing their school. When students were asked to list some other factors that motivated them or their families to choose a charter school, the responses tended to fall into four broad categories: (1) learning environment, (2) personal relationship to school, (3) prior discipline or academic difficulties, and (4) specific curriculum offerings.

Learning environments include smaller class sizes, school structure, and overall school climate. Examples of comments include "nice people, good way of teaching, happy environment"; "it was a better environment for me to learn in"; "it is safer and smaller"; "smaller classes, teachers that care, discipline."

Personal relationship to school includes family member(s) or friend(s) attending, family member on staff, and school close to extended family/caregiver. Examples of comments include "my friends went to this school and were learning more"; "the vice-principal is a friend of the family"; "I have a lot of family here"; "I have a lot of family here and the school is near relatives in case of emergency."

Table 6:3 Students' Reasons for Choosing Their Charter School, Rank Ordered by Mean Scores, 2002

	Not important 1	2	3	4	Very important 5	Mean	STD
My parents think this school is better for me	10.4%	4.8%	14.2%	17.0%	53.6%	3.99	1.34
This school is safer	21.8%	9.1%	17.3%	16.1%	35.8%	3.35	1.56
We heard that teachers were better in this school	26.5%	9.5%	19.0%	16.0%	29.1%	3.12	1.57
Teachers at previous school did not help me enough	29.4%	9.6%	16.7%	13.7%	30.6%	3.07	1.62
This school has small classes	34.9%	9.9%	15.9%	11.5%	27.7%	2.87	1.64
This school has better computers & other equipment	36.9%	11.7%	16.5%	10.8%	24.0%	2.73	1.61
This school has a convenient location	34.1%	11.9%	24.4%	10.2%	19.3%	2.69	1.50
I was not doing very well at the previous school	40.4%	9.4%	17.3%	10.5%	22.4%	2.65	1.61
This school is smaller	43.2%	9.1%	12.8%	10.3%	24.5%	2.64	1.67
My friends were attending this school	54.8%	11.6%	12.9%	7.2%	13.4%	2.13	1.47

Prior discipline or academic difficulties include behavior and learning problems experienced by students at their previous school(s). Examples of comments include "I wasn't doing good behavior-wise"; "I was not learning that much at my other school."

Specific curriculum offerings refers to any specialized curriculum in academic, artistic, vocational, or athletic area. Examples of comments include "my family chose it for its art classes"; "to improve my art skills"; "a school to help you get a career."

6.4 Awareness of School Mission

Students are aware of their schools' missions. The mean score was 3.51 on a 5 point scale (1 was low and 5 was high), with a standard deviation of 1.49 (n = 2,519). About 25 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were aware of their school's mission; 19 percent neither agreed nor disagreed; and 56 percent agreed or strongly agreed.

Nearly nine-tenths of the parents reported they were aware of their school's mission. Just over 82 percent of parents responding thought their school followed the mission well or very well. Previous years' survey results were similar on this question.

6.5 Summary

In this chapter, we have reported descriptive data about charter school students and parents. Much of the data was collected from our three rounds of surveys in May 1999, the spring of 2000, and the spring of 2002. Supplemental data that PDE collects were also used to provide comparison data with noncharter public schools through the state as well as in the host districts.

The sample was made up of a higher percentage of students in grades 5 through 8 than from grades 9 through 12. The grade levels of the children of parents being sampled (grades K-12) was more evenly distributed. Minorities were obviously highly represented in Pennsylvania's charter schools, with all but 18 charter schools enrolling a higher proportion of minorities than their host districts. Charter school students were fairly evenly distributed by gender; however, there were considerable differences among schools, some with high proportions of either males or females, depending on the nature and profile of the school.

The number of low income students was also compared to the host district schools. The proportions are rather even, although there is a considerable amount of variation among charter schools as well as among host districts.

When surveyed on the level of education they planned to achieve, many students were not yet sure. However, of those who planned to continue their education after high school, most aspire to complete a 4-year degree or graduate level study. The length of formal education of parents was also surveyed, and this varied considerably depending on the location and profile of the school.

More than 75 percent of the students surveyed had previously attended a traditional public school. Just under 20 percent had attended a nonpublic school before attending the charter school (i.e., private, parochial, or home school) and the remainder either did not attend school or attended some other type of school or another charter school. While many of the schools had few students moving from nonpublic schools to the charter school, a few schools really stood out with close to half of their students coming from private or parochial schools. This transfer of students from nonpublic schools into charter schools provides an extra burden in terms of costs to the sending districts and has become of point of contention between charter schools and districts.

The primary reasons parents chose a charter school related to quality of teachers and instruction and school safety. Other issues noted were academic reputation and school mission. Students chose the charter school because of parent preference, school safety, and teacher reputation. Both parents and students seemed to be very aware of the school's mission and what it meant.

Chapter Seven
Teacher and Staff Characteristics

One of the stated goals of Act 22 is to provide enhanced professional development opportunities for teachers. Moreover, the charter concept makes certain assumptions about the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and staff. In this chapter we provide a general profile of charter school teachers and staff; and in the following chapter we will examine working conditions, professional development, and levels of satisfaction for charter school teachers and staff. Questions that will be addressed in this chapter include the following:

- ☐ How many teachers and staff do charter schools employ?
- ☐ What are the demographic characteristics of charter school teachers (gender, race/ethnicity, age)?
- ☐ What proportion of teachers and staff are devoted to instruction? What role do other staff play?
- ☐ How much and what kinds of experience/education and training do charter school teachers have? How does this compare with other Pennsylvania teachers?
- ☐ What proportion of teachers are certified to teach in their area? What are the credentials of those who do not hold PA teaching licenses?
- ☐ Why do teachers/staff choose to join a charter school?
- ☐ Are teachers/staff aware of the school's mission?

7.1 Description of Charter School Teachers and Staff

There are two main sources of data for the findings reported in this section. One is from the questionnaires we collected from a sample of teachers and staff in May 1999, spring of 2000, and again in spring of 2002. The other main source is data collected and reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The source of the data and information is included when reporting findings.

Survey Sampling of Teachers and Staff

In sampling teachers and staff, we included all instructional staff and key administrators at each of the 76 schools[1] participating in our study. Seventy-seven schools were open at the onset of the 2001-02 academic year. One school closed in January 2002, leaving 76 schools that we visited and administered surveys.

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[1] We received complete teacher/staff surveys from 73 of the 76 schools in the spring of 2002. We distributed surveys to 2 of the other 3 schools, but did not receive completed surveys.

In our most recent survey, 1,706 teachers and staff completed and returned surveys from the 1,990 that were targeted (85.7 percent response rate). All but 3 schools took part in this component of the evaluation. All participating schools are included in the analysis. One school had a response rate just under 40 percent; 19 schools had a 100 percent response rate, 32 schools had response rates between 80 percent and 99 percent, and the remaining schools had response rates between 50 and 80 percent. The overall response rate of 85.7 percent was 2.7 percent higher than the 2000 sample and 12.7 percent higher than the 1999 sample. The item response for each survey question was typically 95 percent or higher. Appendix A includes specific information about the achieved sample.

Given the large number of surveys and given that all but three charter schools were sampled, we think the sample provides a representative picture of the teachers and staff at the charter schools.

Gender

In terms of gender differences, 72.8 percent of the teachers and staff were female and 27.2 percent were male. Among the principals/directors, there was a more even balance, with slightly more males than females. There was little change in the distribution of teachers and staff in the three years that surveys were conducted. Female teachers and staff are still the majority in charter schools, just as they are in other public schools.

Race/Ethnicity

From the data we collected from the charter school survey, we determined that 68.3 percent of teachers/staff were white, 24.4 percent African American, 5.3 percent Hispanic, 1.5 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, and 0.5 percent Native American. In comparison with the previous sample (1999-00 school year), there is a marked increase in the percentage of white staff (up from 54.8 percent) and a marked decrease in the percentage of African-American teachers/staff (down from 34.6 percent) and Hispanic teachers/staff (down from 6.8 percent).

Age

The age distribution among the Pennsylvania charter school teachers indicates that they are younger than teachers in the traditional public schools. Among classroom teachers in 2001-02 (n=1,188), 47.6 percent were in their 20s, 25.3 percent were in their 30s, 15.7 percent were in their 40s, and 11.2 percent were 50 or older.[2] The classroom teachers were the youngest among the various groups of staff, while the principals/directors were considerably older.

In comparison with the 1998-99 and 1999-00 academic years, charter school teachers in the 2001-02 school year are slightly older. The percent of charter school teachers older than 49 more than doubled between 1999-00 and 2001-02. It was hard to find comparison data for regular public schools in Pennsylvania, but comparisons with national data indicate that the charter school teachers are younger than their regular public school counterparts (see Table 7:1).

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[2] Two respondents indicated they were younger than 20 years old.

Table 7:1 Age Distribution of Charter School Teachers Compared with National Distribution

Age Group	*Pennsylvania Charter School Teachers*			*National Public School Teachers*
	1998-99	*1999-00*	*2001-02*	*1996-97 (NCES, 2000)*
under 30	50.5%	52.3%	47.8%	11.0%
30-49	43.5%	42.3%	41.0%	64.2%
older than 49	6.1%	5.4%	11.2%	24.8%

Role and Proportion of Staff Devoted to Instruction

Among the 1,706 teachers and staff sampled in 2002, 67.2 percent indicated that they were teachers, 10.6 percent teaching assistants, and 4.2 percent special education teachers. Approximately 9 percent indicated that they were Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), principals, or other key administrators; and 9.1 percent indicated that they had some other title or position. In comparison with data from 1999-00, the percentage of staff that indicated that they were classroom teachers increased slightly from 81.5 percent in 2000 to 83.1 percent in 20002.

State-level data show that charter schools have roughly the same percentage of professional personal who are classroom teachers as do all public schools. Table 7:2 illustrates the increase in the numbers of charter school classroom teachers (driven by the increase in the number of charter schools).

Table 7:2 Classroom Teachers as a Percentage of All Professional Staff

	1999-00		*2000-01*		*2001-02*	
	Percent	*Total*	*Percent*	*Total*	*Percent*	*Total*
Charter Schools	81.5%	670	83.1%	1,143	83.1%	1,511
All PA Public Schools	83.6%	115,673	83.3%	118,080	82.8%	119,548

Source: Public Schools Professional Personnel 2001-02, PDE

Distribution of Teachers and Staff by Grade Level

Teachers and staff were asked to indicate which grade they work with most. Teachers appear to be somewhat evenly distributed by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school), but larger differences exist by particular grade levels. Other staff members are concentrated in grades K-2 (this is driven by a high number of teaching assistants in these grades). Figure 7:1 illustrates the distribution of all teachers and staff by grade level as well as the distribution of

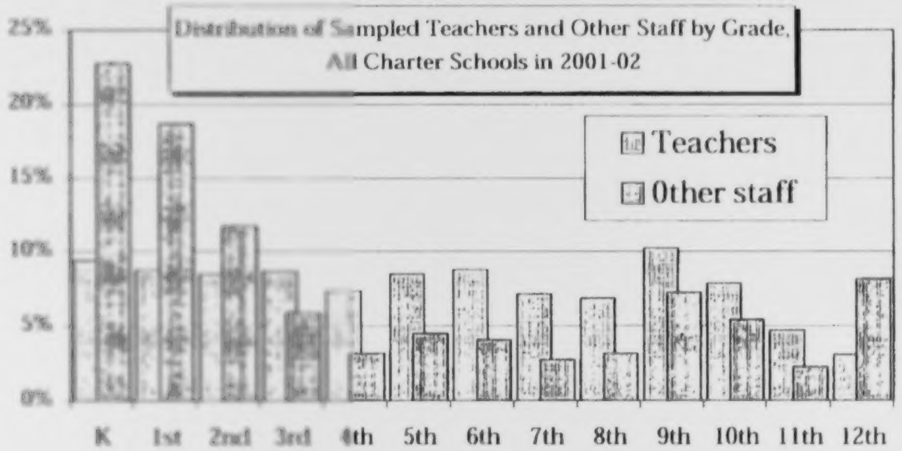

Figure 7.1 Distribution of Sampled Teachers and Other Staff by Grade, 2001-02
Note: 120 teachers and 231 other staff indicated that grade level was not applicable for their position.

teachers only across the various grade levels. Just over 23 percent of the staff indicated that the grade level with which they were working was not applicable because they worked in administration, in the provision of support services, or because they worked with a number of grade levels.

7.2 Educational Background and Years of Experience of Pennsylvania Charter School Teachers and Staff

Certification of Teachers

Of the 1,140 staff who indicated they were teachers in the 2002 sample, 70.4 percent reported that they are currently certified to teach in Pennsylvania. This is a decrease from 81.8 percent in 1998-99 and 75 percent in 1999-00. On the other hand, the percentage of staff who were certified in another state remained at 4.3 percent, the same level as in 1999-00. The percentage of staff who were working to obtain certification also increased from 17.9 percent in 1999-00 to 20.9 percent in 2001-02. The percentage of teachers who were not certified and were not working to obtain certification has increased from 2.9 percent to 4.4 percent between 1999-00 and 2001-02. This information should be considered indicative and not conclusive. For example, among the 50 teachers who reported that they are working to obtain certification, many may be working for a second certification. It may also be the case that the "teachers" who are working to obtain certification are, in fact, only teaching assistants and did not answer the question on role in school correctly.

Most teachers reported that they were teaching in a subject area in which they are certified to teach, although approximately 11.5 percent of the teachers indicated they were not certified in the subjects they taught. This is the same percentage as the previous year. Since the regulations require only 75 percent of the charter school staff to be certified, one can assume that charter schools have more uncertified teachers than do traditional public schools. It is important to point out, however, that many school districts have a large number of teachers on emergency certification.

Teacher Education

In terms of formal education, the charter school staff appear to be well qualified (see Tables 7:3 and 7:4). Among those 1,117 teachers who had completed a university degree, 71.2 percent had a B.A. as their highest college degree, 26.9 percent had an M.A., 1.1 percent had a 5- or 6-year certificate, and 0.8 percent had a Ph.D. Over 38 percent of the staff were working toward another degree. For the most part (i.e., 78.2 percent), they were working toward an M.A.

Table 7:3 Role and Amount of Formal Education, 2001-02

Role	*Did not complete high school*	*Completed high school*	*Less than 4 years of college*	*College graduate BA/BS*	*Graduate courses, no degree*	*Graduate/professional degree*
Teacher	0.0%	0.6%	1.0%	38.5%	30.8%	29.1%
Teaching assistant	2.3%	36.3%	34.5%	19.3%	4.7%	2.9%
Special ed. teacher	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.8%	31.8%	42.4%
CAO/key administrator	0.0%	3.4%	9.0%	10.3%	13.1%	64.1%
Other	0.0%	9.7%	17.2%	18.6%	17.9%	36.6%
Total (N=1,627)	<0.1%	5.4%	6.6%	31.7%	25.4%	30.7%

Table 7:4 Role and Highest Academic Degree, 2001-02

Role	*Bachelors*	*Masters*	*5- or 6-year cert.*	*Doctorate*
Teacher	71.2%	26.9%	1.1%	0.8%
Teaching assistant	81.6%	6.1%	12.2%	0.0%
Special Ed. Teacher	57.7%	35.2%	4.2%	2.8%
CAO/Principal	27.6%	48.8%	7.1%	16.5%
Other	51.9%	42.5%	2.8%	2.8%
Total (N=1,470)	65.7%	29.7%	2.2%	2.4%

Note: Figures based upon sample of teachers and staff. There were 236 surveys with missing data, because a considerable portion of the teaching assistants and staff in the "other" category did not complete a B.A. degree.

The percentage of teachers who had a B.A. increased from 71 percent in 1999 to 75 percent in 2000. In 2002, that percentage dropped to 70.3 (teachers and special education teachers combined). However, the percentages of teachers who had an M.A. and a 5- or 6-year certificate decreased from 26.4 percent to 22.2 percent between 1999 and 2000, then increased to 28.8 percent in 2002. The percentage of teachers who had a doctorate decreased from 2.8 percent in 1999 to 2.5 percent in 2000 to 0.9 percent in 2002. Table 7:5 highlights these changes between the three samples.

Table 7:5 Level of Teacher Education by Survey Year

Degree	*1999 (n=212)*	*2000 (n=275)*	*2002 (n=1,188)*
Bachelors	71.0%	75.0%	70.3%
Masters	24.5	20.7	27.5
5- or 6-year certificate	1.9	1.5	1.3
Doctorate	2.8	2.5	0.9

Years of Experience

Most of the experience for charter school staff was in public schools. About 24 percent of the accrued experience of charter school teachers was in private and/or parochial schools. Table 7:6 contains the results by role and school type.

Table 7:6 Years of Experience by Role and in Various Types of School, 2001-02

	Private School	*Parochial School*	*Charter School*	*Public School*	*Total Yrs. of Experience**	*Years at Current School*
	Mean	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*	*Mean*
Teacher	0.59	0.93	1.92	2.63	6.08	1.88
Teaching assistant	0.93	0.99	2.10	1.72	5.76	2.05
Special ed. teacher	0.56	0.92	1.65	5.99	9.11	1.61
CAOs/key admin.	1.55	1.29	2.31	8.88	14.13	2.23
Other staff	1.16	0.34	1.84	3.39	6.90	1.81
Total, all teacher/ staff (N=1,706)	0.76 (2.76)	0.91 (2.96)	1.95 (1.08)	3.30 (6.88)	7.54 (8.25)	1.91 (1.06)

* Total years of experience as an educator in the school types/roles listed in the table
Note: Standard deviations for the totals are in parentheses.

On average, the teachers had 6.27 years of experience as educators (this does not include related experience outside the school types noted in Table 7:6). This is an increase from 4.75 years of experience reported by teachers in the 1999 sample and 4.80 years reported in 2000. Overall, the levels of formal education and amount of working experience of the charter school staff is similar to charter school teachers in other states we have studied. In terms of years at current school, we can see that the CAOs and key administrators have, on average, spent more years at their charter schools than the teachers have (2.23 years versus 1.88 years, respectively).

7.3 Reasons to Seek Employment at a Charter School

A number of possible reasons for teachers and staff to seek employment at a charter school were listed, and the staff were asked to rate each reason on a 5-point scale according to how relevant each reason was in influencing their decision to seek employment at the charter school. (Table 7:7 includes a rank-ordered list of the results on this question.)

Table 7:7 Reasons for Seeking Employment at This School (Rank Ordered According to Means), 2001-02

	Not important				*Very important*	*Mean*	*STD*	*Median*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*			
Opportunity to work with like-minded educators	3.1%	4.1%	18.9%	36.1%	37.7%	4.01	1.00	4
Safety at school	5.9%	7.8%	18.8%	26.0%	41.5%	3.89	1.20	4
My interest in being involved in an educational reform effort	4.6%	6.8%	20.8%	33.3%	34.6%	3.86	1.10	4
This school has small class sizes	8.2%	6.9%	23.2%	24.1%	37.5%	3.76	1.25	4
Academic reputation (high standards) of this school	7.9%	7.0%	27.7%	27.5%	29.8%	3.64	1.20	4
Parents are committed	9.5%	10.1%	26.0%	28.0%	26.3%	3.52	1.24	4
Promises made by charter school's spokespersons	11.0%	10.3%	24.9%	28.2%	25.6%	3.47	1.28	4
More emphasis on academics as opposed to extracurricular activities	10.0%	8.8%	32.2%	29.7%	19.3%	3.40	1.18	3
Convenient location	19.9%	13.7%	28.1%	18.2%	20.0%	3.05	1.38	3
Difficult to find other positions	39.4%	15.5%	20.4%	12.2%	12.5%	2.43	1.42	2

Two intrinsic factors were among the most important factors for seeking employment in charter schools: the opportunity to work with like-minded educators and interest in an educational reform effort. Other factors that influence teachers/staff to join a charter school are small class sizes, academic reputation, committed parents, and promises made by charter schools' spokespersons. The least important factor rated by teachers/staff was difficulty in finding other positions. Nevertheless, 24.7 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that "difficulty in finding other positions" was an important factor in seeking their position.

Many factors that were important in influencing decisions to seek employment at the charter schools were related to a better working environment: for example, safety at school, working with small classes, and high academic standards.

It is interesting to note that the rank order and relative strength of these factors was largely unchanged between 1998-99, 1999-00, and 2001-02.

7.4 School Mission

Charter schools provide choices for parents. Additionally, charter schools allow teachers to choose learning communities in which to work that match their interests and skills. Note that the choice premise of the charter concept assumes that teachers choose schools according to mission and that this, in turn, makes them more likely to work harder for student outcomes. In this section, we shall explore three general questions related to school mission: (i) how familiar are teachers and staff with the mission of their school? (ii) do teachers and staff believe the mission of their school is being met? and (iii) are charter schools able to fulfill their mission?

All but 36 staff members (2.1 percent) indicated that they were aware of their school's mission. Of those who indicated they were familiar with the mission of the school, 29.6 percent thought the mission was being followed "very well," while 42.9 percent thought it was being followed "well," 22.6 percent "fair," and 5.0 percent "not very well." These figures indicate that most teachers and staff thought their school was living up to its mission.

In comparison with previous years' surveys (1998-99 and 1999-00), teachers and staff in 2001-02 were slightly more aware of their school's mission. The proportion of the teachers and staff that thought the mission of their school was being followed reasonably well (i.e., the percentage of teachers and staff who thought the mission was being followed "very well" and "well" was virtually unchanged from 2000 (up from 72.4 percent to 72.5 percent) and up slightly from 70.4 percent in 1999. As in the previous years, these figures indicate a general satisfaction among the teachers and staff in terms of their school's ability to live up to its mission.

In another section of the questionnaire, the staff were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a number of aspects of the school, including school mission statement. Here, 35.6 percent of the staff indicated that they were "very satisfied" with the mission of their school, while another 35.6 percent indicated that they were "satisfied" with it. While the teachers and staff were generally quite satisfied with the schools' missions, they were not equally convinced that the schools could fulfill them. Nearly 15.6 percent of the staff indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their school's ability to fulfill its mission, while 27 percent were uncertain. Still, 34.9 percent of the staff indicated that their school could fulfill its mission, and 22.5 percent were very convinced that their school could do this.

When comparing the two items in Table 7:8, note a significant difference in level of satisfaction in terms of the school's ability to fulfill its mission ($Z = -17.382$, $p = 0.00$).[3] Hence, there is a significant difference between the "ideal school" represented by the school mission and the "actual school" represented by the perceived ability of the school to fulfill its stated mission. The difference between these two items has increased over the past 4 years, even though one would expect the difference to decrease over time. This difference–in part–can be explained by the presence of new schools and the large rate of teacher attrition in the charter schools.

Table 7:8 Level of Satisfaction with the Mission of the School, 2001-02 (N=1,649)

	Very dissatisfied				*Very satisfied*	*Mean*	*STD*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*		
School mission statement	2.0%	4.4%	22.4%	35.6%	35.6%	3.98	0.97
Ability of school to fulfill its stated mission	5.1%	10.5%	27.0%	34.9%	22.5%	3.59	1.10

7.5 Summary

This chapter contained descriptive information about teachers and staff in Pennsylvania charter schools. A majority of the teachers in charter schools are female, while slightly more principals and directors are males. This generally measures up to the figures for traditional public schools in Pennsylvania. Also, in comparison with traditional public schools, the teachers of charter schools are generally younger. It was found that the majority of teachers in charter schools are white, with African-American teachers second. Since 1999-2000 the percentage of white teachers has increased while the percentage of African-American teachers has decreased. There are few Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Native American teachers in Pennsylvania charter schools.

Background information and data on staff experience were also collected. The percentage of teachers certified in Pennsylvania dropped from the previous year's study, and the percentage of teachers certified in other states remained the same. The percentage of teachers working toward certification increased from 1999-2000. The vast majority of teachers with university degrees had attained a B.A. as their highest level of education. However, about a third of the teachers stated they are working toward another degree. The average years of experience among surveyed Pennsylvania charter school teachers was just over six years, an increase over 1999-2000.

When teachers were asked why they chose to seek employment in the charter school, the response that was highest rated was "opportunity to work with like-minded educators." Teachers also sought to be involved in an educational reform effort and to work in a safe environment. The reason rated least important by teachers was difficulty finding work elsewhere.

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[3] Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used to analyze the difference between these two variables. This nonparametric procedure tests the hypothesis that the two related variables have the same distribution. It makes no assumptions about the shapes of the distributions of the two variables.

Teachers were also asked about the mission statement of their school. The teachers seemed to be quite familiar with their school's mission statement. However, they were not as confident in the school's ability to fulfill the mission.

Chapter Eight
Working Conditions, Professional Development, and Levels of Satisfaction for Charter School Teachers

A common notion about charter schools is that they provide an opportunity for professionals to choose a school that matches their interests. Additionally, charter schools are expected to allow educators an opportunity to innovate and at the same time be held accountable for their work. It is also expected that charter schools will provide new professional development opportunities to teachers. We will explore these topics in this chapter as well as describe the working conditions of teachers and their levels of satisfaction with their schools and the particular conditions under which they work.

The following questions are addressed in this chapter:

- ☐ What are the working conditions of charter school teachers and staff, and how satisfied are the teachers with these conditions?
- ☐ What are the initial expectations of teachers, and how do these compare with their current experiences?
- ☐ How much and what kind of professional development time/opportunities do charter school teachers have?
- ☐ What kind of teacher induction plans do charter schools have for new teachers?
- ☐ Do charter school teachers have opportunities to work collaboratively, select texts, design courses?
- ☐ How much teacher/staff turnover is there in charter schools? What factors appear to be associated with turnover?

8.1 Working Conditions for Teachers and Staff and Levels of Satisfaction

The quality of school facilities varied extensively among the charter schools. Therefore, it was not surprising to see an even split in the responses from teachers and staff concerning the quality of their school's facilities. Generally, teachers had a more positive view of their schools' facilities in 2002 compared with the surveys we administered in 1999-00. Approximately 47.5 percent of the staff were satisfied or very satisfied with the school buildings and facilities. This is up from approximately 30 percent in the 1999-00 survey. On a related item, 38 percent of the teachers and staff agreed or strongly agreed that the physical facilities were good, while the rest were either not satisfied with the facilities or were uncertain. Again, this number is up from 26.3 percent in 1999-00.

Survey results indicate that the schools vary widely in the quality of their facilities and the availability of resources. This was also confirmed in site visits and interviews. Just under 45 percent of the teachers and staff indicated that they thought their school had sufficient financial resources (35 percent thought so in 1999-00). On a related item, 51.6 percent of the teachers and staff indicated that they were satisfied with the resources available for instruction. This is a slight increase from 46.9 percent in 1999-00.

Nevertheless, nearly half of the teachers and other staff are dissatisfied with their resources. A number of the staff stated that this was among the biggest weaknesses of their school. Parents and students occasionally mentioned this as well. This quote from a student illustrates how a lack of resources can affect teaching and learning:

> *Well my teachers don't have what they need to teach me–why? Because they have broken books, board, work materials. I feel as though they need more. Lots of the teachers are really good but they need good material. My science teacher . . . she's great. She deserves more than she has to work [with].*

A number of items in the questionnaire addressed class size, an issue related to human and fiscal resources. It was clear that this was an important reason for seeking employment at a charter school and an aspect of the schools with which the teachers were particularly interested. Over 60 percent of staff disagreed that class sizes at their school were too large to meet individual student's needs.

Throughout the country, the limits of human and fiscal resources mean that schools may lack auxiliary staff such as janitors and secretaries. This can mean that teachers have to take on responsibilities beyond teaching. Unlike findings in Michigan and Connecticut, most teachers and staff in Pennsylvania charter schools reported that they did not have many noninstructional duties in addition to their teaching load. Nevertheless, some teachers considered this an issue. One teacher seemed to see it as the price she paid for greater autonomy at her charter school:

> *The workload is now greater. I am performing many noninstructional tasks, for example we have no janitor or maintenance person. I can change programs easily now. I have greater freedom now to do what I want.*

Autonomy of Pennsylvania Charter School Teachers

On the whole, the teachers indicated that they have autonomy and can use their ideas and creativity in designing the curriculum at their schools. While we did not have a clear response to this from many teachers, we found that a number of the schools were exemplary in regard to this issue. Some of our findings particular to individual schools are included in the following examples:

- ☐ At a few schools, many of the teachers indicated they have a greater degree of autonomy than at other schools where they have taught.
- ☐ Responses from teachers in interviews or the open-ended questions on the survey confirmed that at one high school, the teachers are asked to experiment with specific techniques. To sum up what the teachers told us, we include the following comment: "I have been able to design and implement curriculum."
- ☐ Teachers at an urban school noted that they design the curriculum based on history, traditions, customs, and culture of African Americans.
- ☐ At one school, the teachers told us they were able to be innovative, but only after approval from the chief administrative officer.
- ☐ At one of the Philadelphia schools, the lead teachers are responsible for coordinating the department, but all teachers are encouraged to design and create new strategies and programs.

In the annual reports and interviews with school officials, we found evidence that there was a conscious effort at a number of charter schools to involve teachers in developing curriculum. Examples of this include the scheduling of weekly meetings for teachers to meet with a curriculum and technology specialist, the existence of teacher advisory committees to the charter school boards, and the use of teachers' meetings to establish goals and objectives for the year.

Opportunities for Developing Innovative Instructional Practices

The teacher survey asked teachers about their initial expectations and to compare these with what they are currently experiencing in their schools. They were asked whether their schools support/are supporting innovative practices and whether they will be/are autonomous and creative in their classrooms. As indicated in Table 8:1, there is a 17.5 percent discrepancy between expectation and current experience in the area of innovations and a 12.7 percent discrepancy between their expectation and current experience in the area of autonomy and creativity. These discrepancies are nearly identical to those observed in the 1999-00 survey.

Table 8:1 Teacher Expectations and Current Experience With Regard to Innovative Practices and Autonomy

	Initial Expectation					*Current Experience*				
	False	*Partly true*	*True*	*Mean*	*STD*	*False*	*Partly true*	*True*	*Mean*	*STD*
The school will support/is supporting innovative practices	1.3%	21.6%	77.1%	2.76	0.46	6.4%	33.9%	59.6%	2.53	0.61
Teachers will be/are autonomous and creative in their classrooms	2.3%	20.7%	77.0%	2.75	0.48	4.7%	31.0%	64.3%	2.60	0.58

Teachers submitted a variety of responses in terms of their autonomy. A large proportion reported that they are autonomous and creative in their classrooms. Others expressed that they are empowered in decisions related to curriculum, instruction, and day-to-day operation of the school. Several said their working conditions are very flexible compared with work in previous schools. Some teachers became aware of innovative practices or opportunities to be innovative when they joined their charter school. One teacher stressed that the most positive aspect of her school was the following:

> *Freedom to create curriculum, focus on helping students develop in ways that are not traditionally attended to, curriculum focuses on real world, not standardized tests . . . teachers have control over decision making for the school.*

There were, however, some barriers to autonomy and opportunities to innovate. Some complained about the lack of time available to create unique lessons. One teacher described the relation between resources and ability to innovate:

> *Teachers are encouraged to be creative in their approach. However more resources would make it easier for them to accomplish this, especially by giving them more time to make plans instead of researching for materials.*

Teachers' Salaries

Charter school teachers had average annual salaries of $34,400. This can be contrasted with the state average of $52,333. This indicates a salary gap of nearly $18,000 between the average charter school teacher salary and that of teachers in other public schools in Pennsylvania. The gap is slightly smaller $16,599 when we compare teachers in charter schools with those in host districts. At least some of these differences, however, are likely to be due to differences in education and experience of charter and noncharter teachers and to differences in financial resources and the cost of the factors of production. Thus, we estimated a statistical model (similar to the models used to examine student achievement in Chapter 12) that allowed us to compare charter schools only with noncharter schools that were matched on factors such as years of experience, levels of formal education, and per-pupil expenditures.[1] Here, we find that the charter-noncharter discrepancy persists, with the typical charter school paying its teachers $11,325 less than comparable noncharter public schools across the Commonwealth. This estimate of the charter-noncharter salary discrepancy is similar to the one reported (using the same statistical methods) in the 2000 report. There the discrepancy was approximately $9,800. However, one must interpret these comparisons with some caution given inflation. Table 8:2 contains the average salaries figures for the various comparison groups.

Table 8:2 Average Teacher Salary in Charter and Noncharter Public Schools, 2001-02

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[1] This estimate was derived by estimating an ordinary least squares regression model on teacher salary data for all noncharter school districts in Pennsylvania. The model regressed average teacher salary at the district level against variables representing teacher education and experience along with per-pupil expenditures. To generate the predicted value for charter schools, we enter mean values on each of the predictor variables in order to generate the predicted value for teacher salary conditional upon these mean values. The analysis is based on all Pennsylvania public schools and uses 2001-02 salaries. Readers are invited to contact the authors for details on the analysis.

	Mean	St. dev	Min	Max
Charters	$34,400	$3,881	$20,600	$42,099
Host Districts	$50,999	$6,239	$41,353	$68,628
Similar Schools	$45,725			
All PA	$52,333			

Note that there were 5 missing values for the charter schools and a similar number of the noncharter public schools. State average was taken from PDE web site, which did not provide measures of variation.

From this analysis we can still see that charter school teachers have salaries that are substantially lower than what one would expect and what these teachers might receive in regular public schools. These differences can be explained in part by the charter schools' need to divert resources to purchase or renovate facilities. Tentative findings reported in the chapter on finance highlight that charter schools are in fact devoting a lower proportion of their expenditures to capital investments than traditional public schools.

Table 8:3 includes data on how the teachers and staff at Pennsylvania charter schools rated their levels of satisfaction with salary and benefits as well as various other aspects of their current working conditions.

Table 8:3 Levels of Teacher and Staff Satisfaction with Working Conditions

	Not very satisfied *1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*Very satisfied* *5*	*Mean*	*STD*	*Median*
Salary level	10.9%	18.6%	37.9%	21.8%	10.7%	3.03	1.13	3
Fringe benefits	9.3%	15.1%	32.2%	27.0%	16.4%	3.26	1.18	3
Resources available for instruction	8.7%	13.5%	26.2%	27.7%	23.9%	3.45	1.23	4
School buildings and facilities	9.2%	17.0%	26.2%	24.5%	23.0%	3.35	1.26	3
Availability of computers and other technology	6.8%	11.7%	20.2%	26.0%	35.3%	3.71	1.25	4
School governance	9.0%	13.9%	31.2%	26.0%	19.8%	3.34	1.20	3
Administrative leadership of school	9.5%	12.2%	23.3%	24.9%	30.0%	3.54	1.29	4
Evaluation or assessment of your performance	6.3%	8.4%	21.8%	35.5%	28.0%	3.71	1.15	4

Just over 32 percent of the teachers and staff were satisfied or very satisfied with the salaries they received, while 29.5 percent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their salaries. A large proportion of the staff (37.9 percent) indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their salaries. These numbers are slightly more positive than responses from 1999-00. The teachers and staff were generally more satisfied with the fringe benefits than with salary. Satisfaction with fringe benefits was down slightly from 1999-00.

We now look at other indicators of satisfaction: the differences between what staff expected before starting employment at the charter school and how that compares with their current experiences.

8.2 Initial Expectations and Current Experiences of Teachers and Staff

A number of identical items were used in the surveys to examine and compare the charter school staffs' "initial expectations" as opposed to "current experience" (See Appendix A, Teacher/Staff Results, Question 16). In general, it is clear that the teachers and other staff were content with their schools and satisfied with the services they provide. It is interesting to note, however, that there were statistically significant differences between what was initially expected and what the educators were currently experiencing on all variables. What the staff were reporting as "current experience" was significantly less positive than their "initial expectations."[2]

The biggest differences between initial expectations and current experience were on the following items:

1. The school will have/has effective leadership and administration.
2. Students will receive/receive sufficient individual attention.
3. Teachers will be/are able to influence the steering and direction of the school.
4. Students will/are receiving appropriate special education services, if necessary.
5. There will be/is good communication between the school and parents/guardians.

This does not imply that teachers and staff were not satisfied with these aspects of their school. Rather, it infers that they had high expectations in these areas that did not correspond with what they were currently experiencing.

While these findings are rather striking, it is important to consider their educational significance. Likewise, it is important to consider likely explanations for these findings. Given the feedback we received from teachers and staff, it seems that teachers simply expected too much. A large portion of the teachers were seeking jobs at schools that were not yet in operation. Given such a situation, expectations are understandably high. Since many of the teachers are also very young, their expectations may be higher than normal. Unfortunately, we do not have comparable data from regular public schools.

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[2] Because these questions are actually nonparametric in nature and the variables are ordinal, the marginal homogeneity test was used to compare the paired distribution of responses. This also found significant reductions in expectations on all items ($p = .001$).

Between the 1999-00 survey and the 2001-02 survey there were many differences. The percentage of respondents answering "true" on the current experience question increased for eight items and decreased for six items.

On most items, the difference between initial expectations and current experience actually decreased between the two years, which suggests areas where improvements were being made, even if the initial expectations were still not met. These areas of improvement are listed below and ranked according to improvements.

1. Teachers will be/are able to influence the steering and direction of the school.
2. There will be/are new professional opportunities for teachers.
3. The school will support/is supporting innovative practices.
4. Students will have/have access to computers and other new technologies.
5. The school will have/has effective leadership and administration.
6. There will be/is good communication between the school and parents/guardians.
7. Teachers will be/are committed to the mission of the school.
8. Students will receive/receive sufficient individual attention.
9. Students will be/are eager and motivated to learn.

It is interesting to note the discrepancies in the factors that influence teachers/staff to join a charter school. Teachers/staff were asked about their initial expectations and current experience in the quality of instruction and teachers' empowerment. There was a 17.9 percent difference between their expectations (78.8 percent) and current experience (60.9 percent) that the quality of instruction will be/is high. In terms of teacher empowerment, there is a large difference between teachers' expectations and current experience in influencing the steering and direction of the school.

The gap between teachers' expectations and their current experiences is a warning sign for charter schools. Although there are differences between teachers/staff's initial expectations and current experience, teachers/staff generally are still positive about their schools.

8.3 Professional Development in Pennsylvania Charter Schools

Our main source of information on professional development plans was annual reports submitted by the schools in August 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002. We also collected information on professional development opportunities during interviews with charter school staff. Teacher/staff surveys included still other items regarding professional development. The annual reports often included the number of days or hours devoted to professional development as well as some details about the nature of the training. We also used data on professional development reported by PDE.

One widely used, though imperfect measure of a school's commitment to professional development is the number of days its teachers are engaged in various in service activities. PDE collects data for all schools on the number of teacher absence days for professional development activities. The obvious limitation to this indicator is that it fails to capture professional development activities that do not require teacher absences. Thus, it excludes such activities as teachers reading books and engaging in discussions on their own; teachers taking evening, weekend, or summer courses; and so on. Also, teacher shortages in many districts are compelling administrators to find professional development activities that do not require teacher absences and hence the need for scarce substitutes. Many administrators schedule professional development activities during the afternoon hours–hours during which teachers are normally in the school building.

School personnel apparently interpret the survey question differently. Some, it appears, read it as covering only those professional development days enumerated in teacher contracts. Others appear to interpret the question as covering all such activities, whether called for by contract or not. In spite of these limitations, this indicator provides a useful picture of at least one aspect of professional development in Pennsylvania charter schools.

In our October 2000 report, we calculated the number of professional development days by dividing the number of teacher absences per school by the total number of teachers.[3] This yields an estimate of the number of days for the "typical" teacher. Unfortunately, it does not allow us to observe variations among teachers. Next, we compared the number of professional development days in charter schools and noncharter schools.

From this analysis we found that, on average, charter school teachers have 7 days of professional development each year, compared with 5 days for noncharter public schools. It is important to point out, however, that the charter school totals were influenced by 4 schools that reported between 17 and 50 days of professional development per year. These outliers clearly weighted the charter school total. At the same time there were apparently 10 charter schools that did not report these data to PDE and were not included in these figures.

It was clear from the documentation and interview data that a number of schools had high expectations in terms of professional development for their classroom teachers. The charter school teachers seemed to have support for professional development opportunities from their schools. The support included release time from teaching, scheduled time built into teacher's schedules, and tuition reimbursement. One school noted that it had established a professional development committee that helps plan and arrange for professional development activities. Graduate level classes were emphasized by many as an important and sometimes required form of professional development. In one urban school, the teachers are expected to enroll in graduate classes approved by the board of education of the local school district. At another school the teachers develop their own professional development goals and discuss these with the CAO.

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[3] We attempted to replicate this analysis with updated information, but the data reported by charter schools for 2000-01 and 2001-02 are incomplete and inconsistent.

The format for professional development opportunities include workshops, conferences, in-service training, outside training, and graduate courses. The content of professional development opportunities includes methods of teaching, technology, student assessment, and classroom management. For example, some teachers attended conferences dealing with reading programs and curriculum development. Several teachers indicated that they attended in-service training sessions dealing with at-risk students, classroom management, and discipline. Others reported that the training sessions were focused on software and computers.[4]

Most of the cited professional development consists of sessions prior to the start of school in September plus weekly or monthly staff meetings at the school. Some schools allot only a few hours a month or week for professional development while others allot a number of days. While the schools were not always very specific about how they use these days or hours, it appears that the topics addressed reflect the changing needs of the staff.

Below we have included examples of how the school staff described the amount and scheduling of the professional development activities at their schools:

☐ Teachers have professional development activities every Friday from 2:30 to 4:30.
☐ Two weeks of professional development prior to school opening, with topics such as standards, writing across the curriculum, portfolio assessment, progress reports, inclusion, differentiated instruction, conflict resolution, and peer mediation
☐ Employ consultants from local colleges and universities to present on topics such as classroom management and dealing with inner-city youths.
☐ One and one-half hours each day dedicated to teacher planning and professional development
☐ Weekly faculty meetings with teacher-initiated professional development
☐ One weekend each quarter is designated for professional development.
☐ Professional development model that assumes teachers are capable of self-direction and self-initiated learning
☐ Weekly staff meetings and summer days set aside for professional development and team-building
☐ Certified staff are reimbursed for graduate courses and encouraged to work toward additional certification.
☐ On-site graduate classes offered through local college
☐ All staff participate in five days of training in their academic subject area.

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[4] According to the national School and Staffing Survey (Choy, Chen, & Ross, 1998) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, public school teachers across the nation take part in a variety of professional development activities. A majority (64 percent) of public school teachers participated in sessions dealing with methods of teaching in their field, 51.4 percent with student assessment, 50.9 percent with cooperative learning in the classroom, 47 percent with use of educational technology for instruction, and 30 percent conducted in-depth study in their subject.

- ☐ All teachers meet with school administrators at beginning of the school year to discuss skill areas needing improvement; plan is reviewed twice during the year.
- ☐ Fifteen days devoted to developing teachers' technical proficiencies with instructional materials

8.4 Teacher Induction Plans

Generally speaking, the teacher induction plan is for new teachers and includes training and orientation activities at the beginning of their first year of teaching. Some schools reported that the teacher induction plan covered ongoing training throughout the teachers' first year.

Many schools conduct training for all their staff, not just new staff, while others have separate orientations, workshops, and mentoring for the new teachers. Almost all charter schools provided information on their induction plans in the 2001-02 annual reports. Most schools provided a copy of their induction plan, while others provided plan summaries. Most schools considered the induction plan to be an orientation to the school and a program to help teachers become more effective and develop their goals for the year.

The purpose of the teacher induction activities was most often to familiarize new teachers with the school and to better prepare them for their work in the classrooms. Topics covered in the orientation or initial meetings at the school included such things as the history of school, school mission and goals, policies and procedures, personal attributes, meetings with students and staff, overview of classroom duties, curriculum development, state academic standards, classroom observation, policies and procedures training, and strategies to improve teaching performance.

The most common element of the induction plan was mentoring of new teachers. Several teachers indicated that the school assigned a mentor to help them increase their general professional knowledge, instructional techniques and practices, classroom management, and student assessment. The induction coordinator or mentor was often the CAO, curriculum specialist, director of instruction, other experienced or "lead" teachers, or a teacher education professor from a local college or university.

Most schools required participation in workshops. A few schools expected the new teachers to develop their own professional plan during the induction period. One school expected the new teachers to work with the director of instruction to build professional competence, while at another school the new teachers worked with a curriculum specialist on a weekly basis and attended other meetings/workshops to help them improve instruction. A number of schools required the new teachers to have extra days/weeks of preparation and training before the start of the school year (most required about one week, some as long as two weeks).

One criticism we heard from a number of CAOs during our 2002 interviews as well as during our 1999-00 interviews is that teacher education programs at the universities and colleges are not preparing teachers to work in urban classroom settings. This appears to be one of the factors related to teacher turnover.

8.5 Turnover of Teachers and Staff in Pennsylvania Charter Schools

One factor that is limiting to charter schools is the relatively high rates of attrition among teachers and staff. We addressed this issue in our October 2000 report. Among the 30 schools participating in that study, nearly 40 percent of the teachers left during or between the 1998-99 and 1999-00 school years. During this same time period, fewer than 10 percent of the CAOs left or were replaced. During or just after the 2000-01 academic year, more than 24 percent of charter school teachers left their respective schools—a notable drop in attrition from the previous two years. Nevertheless, charter schools continue to have a much higher teacher attrition percentage than noncharter public schools. The attrition rate for all Pennsylvania public schools was 6.5 percent, while charter host districts had a turnover rate of 8.5 percent.

Some factors that could affect these percentages include the urbanicity of a school's location, the racial and economic makeup of the district, and the years of experience of the teachers. When comparing charter schools with noncharter schools matched on these variables, we still see similar differences in attrition rates.

One item on the teacher/staff questionnaire that provided a related indicator of attrition was the question, "Do you plan (hope) to teach here next year?" Eighty-six percent of the staff indicated that they wished/intended to return the next year. This was an increase from approximately 75 percent in 1999-00. Based on conversations with charter school CAOs and teachers, it is clear that the level of attrition at some of the charter schools was extremely high, while at others nearly all professional staff were returning. For those teachers/staff who planned not to return next year (14 percent), their dissatisfaction was with school governance, administrative leadership, resources available for instruction, lack of a teachers' union, and salary levels. These sources of dissatisfaction and job insecurity seemed to factor into their decisions to leave.

While a majority of staff indicated that teachers were not insecure about their future at their particular school, 36.2 percent of the teachers and staff indicated otherwise. This number is nearly identical to the percentage in 1999-00. There are numerous possible reasons for this insecurity. It could be due to uncertainty about the charter school reform as a whole. The role of the particular school in its community and its ability to live up to its mission could also be issues. The lack of teachers' unions, tenure, and other contributors to job security could also be factors. One teacher at a school with an exceptionally high turnover rate noted a problem with "job security . . . the headmaster could fire someone on the spot." However, some argue that being able to easily dismiss inadequately performing teachers helps the school realize its mission.

Regardless of the reasons for turnover, it is clear that high turnover can be problematic to morale and to student achievement. A large number of staff, parents, and especially students complained about the high staff turnover. One student complained that "We don't have any teachers or principles [sic] that stay for the whole year." Another student lamented, "We don't learn, teacher gave up on us. Teachers leave all the time . . ." One parent explained:

> *When a teacher is replaced the young ADULTS need to know why. Esp where an excellent motivated teacher leaves and the next day is replaced by a person who completely changes the course of that period and undermines and unmotivates top students. He is hurting the students who really care and give it their all.*

Further study is needed to examine the factors behind teacher attrition. For now, however, it is safe to speculate that the substantially lower salaries that charter schools can pay teachers is one important factor behind these high levels of attrition.

8.6 Summary

The atmosphere of a school greatly influences a teacher's job satisfaction. Factors such as facilities, autonomy, and salary are important to teachers. Both site visits and teacher surveys indicated that the facilities and resources of charter schools vary widely. Naturally, teacher satisfaction with these issues varies widely as well.

Many teachers have come to charter schools seeking autonomy in creating and implementing curriculum. We found evidence at a number of charter schools that there was a conscious effort to involve teachers in developing curriculum. Teachers indicated that they thought they had autonomy in curriculum decisions and freedom to utilize creative approaches to curriculum. Indeed, many teachers report that they have considerable flexibility and opportunities for creativity in their day-to-day activities. The teachers are encouraged in their collaborative work efforts through programs of team teaching, mentoring, and staff members creating presentations.

While charter school teachers make considerably less than their public school counterparts, not all are dissatisfied with their salary, with some 32.5 percent reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied. It is worth noting that salaries may be lower due to the need to divert funding to the renovation and development of facilities.

There was a measurable difference between initial teacher expectations and current experience on many topics. Statements relating to topics such as effective school leadership and administration, students receiving sufficient individual attention, teachers' ability to influence the steering and direction of the school, students receiving appropriate special education services, and communication between the school and parents/guardians had the largest decline from initial expectations to current experience. However, many teachers were hired before the school opened, many were young teachers, and some simply expected too much. Despite these figures, many teachers are still quite satisfied with their teaching environment.

Data from our October 2000 report indicate that charter schools devote considerably more time to teacher professional development activities than noncharter schools. A strong emphasis on graduate study was frequently reported, with some programs requiring it. The format for professional development opportunities included workshops, conferences, in-service training, and graduate courses. The content of professional development opportunities included methods of teaching, technology, student assessment, at-risk students, and classroom management. A school's teacher induction program also falls under the category of professional development. Schools generally held meetings to orient new teachers to the school, help them become more effective, and teach them to set goals. The induction plans often included a mentoring program.

Although staff turnover declined from 1999-00 to 2001-02, the rates of turnover are still much higher than at traditional public schools. Lower salaries appear to be a major factor; job security may be another. About 14 percent of the staff did not plan to return to the school the following year. Further studies can explore the reasons for high turnover in charter schools and provide guidance on how to recruit, train, and keep qualified staff. As one parent emphasized:

> *I would like to see greater teacher retention. Good teachers who are experienced in the curriculum are vital. Because of the long history of teachers leaving after a very short stay with the school it may be in everyone's best interest for the school district to discuss/investigate this issue with the administrators of the charter school. We had a very good experience with our son's kindergarten at this charter school and would like for it to remain approved as a charter school. We would like the environment to be teacher-friendly —whether there needs to be adjustments in salary, "work load", etc. I would recommend the school to any child . . . contingent on the school's ability to get and retain good teachers.*

Chapter Nine
Innovation

The charter concept, as discussed in Chapter 1, is predicated on an autonomy-accountability bargain. An important question for policymakers involves what charter schools actually do with their autonomy. Act 22 states that one goal of the charter school law is to "encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods" [24 P.S. §1702-A(3)]. In this chapter we attempt to assess the innovativeness of practices in Pennsylvania charter schools. In doing so, we address the evaluation question pertaining to innovative and promising practices[1]. We are careful to use the word "attempt" because, as we shall see, conceptual ambiguities and data limitations restrict our ability to develop a precise evaluation of innovativeness.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of innovation and how we have applied it in this evaluation report. We also discuss the data and methods used and some important limitations associated with them. The remainder of the chapter contains a topic-by-topic discussion of innovations in a number of areas of charter school practice:

- ☐ mission and target population
- ☐ school organization
- ☐ curriculum and instruction
- ☐ use of computers and technology

We end this chapter with a discussion on how the charter schools' innovations impact their host districts, and the factors that facilitate or impede these impacts.

9.1 Conceptualization and Methods

On its face, the concept of innovation is quite straightforward. The root of the word derives from the Latin *novus*, which means new. An innovative educational practice, therefore, is any such practice that is new. However, a little thought reveals that the concept is fraught with ambiguities (Miron & Nelson, 2002). Indeed, how new must the practice be to be considered innovative? Must it be truly unique, or may it build on other practices? Perhaps innovations can consist of combining existing program elements in new ways or in finding new ways to implement and deliver existing program ideas. Finally, what is the frame of reference for assessing a practice's innovative character: all schools or schools in a particular district?

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[1] As noted in chapter 1, the specific question is, "What are promising practices in charter schools that could be included in district systemic reform?"

Whether a given practice is innovative depends, in part, on the purposes at hand. Charter school advocates variously propose a number of purposes or ultimate goals for charter schools, each of which has different implications for innovation. In one view, charter schools are to be public education's "R&D." This statement of charter schools' goals is consistent with a fairly ambitious view of innovation—the creation of truly unique practices that can be shared and perhaps emulated by a large group of schools. A more modest view of innovation is that charter schools exist primarily to provide choice. If this is the case, then innovations must simply provide new options for students and parents in a particular geographic area. Hence, the bar is high on the former view and somewhat lower on the latter view. The Charter Appeals Board (see Chapter 4) has taken the narrower, second view of innovation. In a number of decisions,[2] the Board has stated that a charter school innovation is any practice or service not provided by the charter school's host district. Figure 9:1 illustrates this definition of innovation using a Venn diagram. In the diagram, the range of programs offered by the host district is represented by the circle on the right, while the programs offered by the charter school are represented by the circle on the left. Innovation, in this diagram, consists in the part of the charter school circle that does not intersect with the host district circle. Morever, the Board has ruled that whether a practice is innovative does not depend on how much overall overlap there is between host district and charter school practices (the intersection between the two sets). Neither is the extent of charter school offerings relevant in identifying innovations. In terms of the diagram, this means that the size of the charter school circle that does not

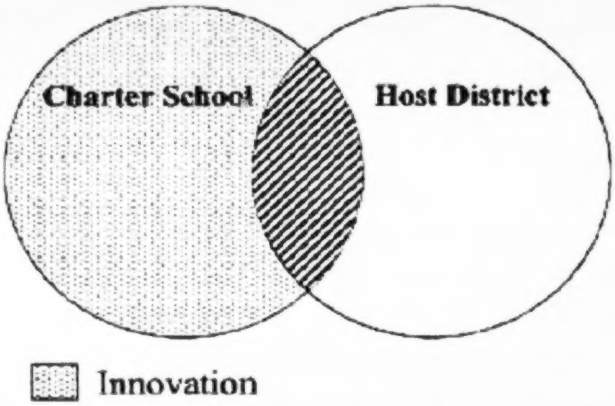

Figure 9:1 Charter Appeals Board Definition of Innovation

overlap with the host district circle is irrelevant. The CAB's definition of innovation seems to clearly link the concept to the notion of school choice, as it focuses attention on the range of public school alternatives available in a given geographical area.

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[2] See, e.g., Souderton Charter School Collaborative, CAB 1992-2; Phoenix Academy Charter School, CAB 1999-10; Sugar Valley Rural Charter School, CAB 1999-4; William Bradford Academy Charter School, CAB 1999-8; Vitalistic Therapeutic Center Charter School, CAB 1999-6; Hills Academy Charter School, CAB 1999-12; Phoenix Charter School CAB 2001-6.

Both definitions have strengths and weaknesses. The R&D definition leaves open such questions as whether innovative practices can include new ways of combining or implementing preexisting practices. Also, it is unclear what the appropriate context of comparison should be (Miron & Nelson, 2002). Few, if any, charter school practices are likely to be new when one considers all education systems in the world. However, these practices might be innovative when compared with the experience of a particular nation or region. The definition is silent on these issues. The CAB definition has the important virtue of precision. However, one perhaps unintended implication is that charter schools with large host districts are less likely to meet the innovation criterion, since large districts usually contain schools that experiment with a wider variety of practices.

We consider the CAB definition, having been enunciated in an official board decision, as the authoritative definition and give more weight to it. However, given that we have been charged with developing recommendations on Pennsylvania's charter school law, we believe it would be remiss not to consider alternative definitions.

Most of the data used in this chapter come from annual reports submitted by charter schools to the Office of Educational Initiatives (OEI) and from interviews conducted with charter school CAOs and administrators. The report template asks schools to "list the unique aspects, features, or innovations of your charter school." Thus, data from the annual reports are subjective, since they rely on individual definitions of "innovation." They are also selective in that they rely on school officials' decisions about whether to report certain practices. As a consequence, we have resisted the temptation to quantify responses from the annual reports.

Another limitation to the annual report data is evident when we consider the CAB's definition of innovation, which requires explicit comparisons between charter schools and host districts. The annual reports provided by OEI contain no information on noncharter schools, nor are we aware of similar reports provided by host districts. In some cases we have used data from the school profiles on course offerings and other practices (e.g., full day kindergarten). However, these data are limited to simple yes/no responses and provide little opportunity for evaluators to assess the manner in which they are actually implemented.

These important data limitations, along with the conceptual ambiguities, leave us wary of making any clear pronouncements on whether and to what extent Pennsylvania charter schools are innovative. However, we hope to provide information that will be useful in making such judgments.

9.2 Mission and Target Population

One commonly cited way in which charter schools might be innovative is in their educational missions and philosophies. Pennsylvania charter schools provide a wide range of educational choices that reflect a variety of pedagogical approaches or models. Most school missions reference a commitment to community-based education. Likewise, these schools vary according to the groups of students to which they cater: at-risk students, college preparation students, adjudicated youth. A number of charter schools serving students at the high school level focus on vocational/career programs or science and technology. Some have a rather specific focus, such as aerospace and aviation, architecture and design, or performing arts. Schools serving lower elementary grades often have a profile that focuses on character education. A number of schools have unique cultural or bilingual programs that are reflected in the whole school program.

Many Pennsylvania charter schools are innovative in that they include nontraditional grade groupings. As Table 9:1 illustrates, most schools (67 percent) utilize grade groupings that mix the elementary, middle, and high school grades. Twenty-nine percent of the schools, for instance, mix both elementary and middle school grades, while 18 percent mix middle and high school grades. Another 20 percent mix elementary, middle, and high school grades.

Table 9:1 Nontraditional Grade Groupings in Charter Schools, 2001-02

Grouping	*Number of Charter Schools*	*Percent of Charter Schools (N=76)*
Elementary & middle school	22	28.9%
Middle school & high school	14	18.4
Elementary, middle, & high school	15	19.7
Total	51	67.1

Note: Elementary grades include kindergarten through grade 6; middle school grades include grades 7 through 9; high school grades include grades 10 through 12.

9.3 School Organization

As we saw in Chapter 3, Pennsylvania's charter school law grants considerable autonomy to the schools in matters of organization. Thus, another way in which charter schools might be unique or innovative is in their structure and organization. First, charter schools are often characterized as smaller and more attuned to the individual student than noncharter public schools. Enrollment data do suggest that Pennsylvania charter schools are, on average, smaller than the Commonwealth's noncharter public schools. As of the 2001-02 academic year, the median charter school enrolled 280 students, compared with approximately 540 for noncharter public schools. However, there is considerable variation among charter schools, with some schools reporting enrollments as low as 23 and as high as more than 2,000 students during the 2001-02 academic year. Interestingly, there appears to be a trend toward larger charter schools. While the schools opened during each year since the law's inception have included both small and large enrollments, the median enrollment has increased. However, many charter schools start with only a few grades and then add a grade each year, thus contributing to the trend of growing charter schools. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the median charter school enrollment in Pennsylvania is considerably larger than the national median of 137 (RPP International, 2000).[3] Thus, while charter schools may be distinguished from noncharter public schools in terms of size, the differences appear to be narrowing somewhat.

Another way in which charter school organization might be unique is in class size. Surveys administered during the 2001-02 academic year indicated that small class sizes were an important factor leading teachers to seek employment at a charter school. Figure 9:2 demonstrates that this expectation is largely borne out in the schools, since charter schools typically have more small classes and fewer large classes than noncharter public schools. Specifically, 62 percent of all charter school classes during the 1999-2000 academic year had 20 or fewer students, compared with 35 percent in noncharter public schools, a statistically significant difference (p<0.01). As before, there is considerable variation among charter schools, with several schools reporting no classes with 20 or fewer students and others reporting that all of their classes are small. Most charter schools did not report class size information for the 2000-01 and 2001-02 academic years.

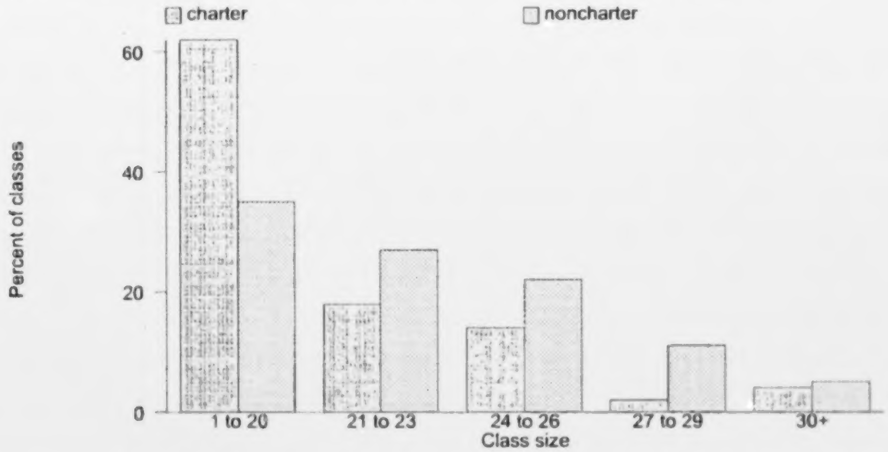

Figure 9:2 Average Class Size in Charter and Noncharter Schools, 1999-00

Charter schools also may differ in the way they structure the school calendar. While the average charter school offered 185 days of instruction during 2001-02[4]

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[3] This figure was taken from 1998-99 data, the most recent year for which national data are available.

[4] For charter and noncharter public schools, Pennsylvania requires a minimum school year of 180 days and minimum of 900 hours of instruction at the elementary level and 990 hours of instruction at the secondary level (24 P. S. §§ 15-1501 and 15-1504).

7 charter schools reported offering 200 or more days of instruction that academic year. The highest number of instructional days reported was 230.

We also examined the number of hours of instruction offered each day. Unfortunately, large quantities of missing data in the charter school annual reports leave us reluctant to report quantitative evidence. A number of schools did, however, offer anecdotal evidence of extended school days. Readers should bear in mind, however, that we were unable to determine the extent to which these practices are employed in noncharter public schools.

One school reported that its day goes from 11:00 a.m until 5:00 p.m. to accommodate students' schedules. Another school claims that "the school day and academic calendar will be extended resulting in more than three additional years of instruction over the K-8 sequence." In addition, many schools reported offering after-school or Saturday programs. Most of these programs are designed to provide extra help for at-risk students, for students who have fallen behind in their classes, or for those who need a little extra tutoring in a specific subject. Other programs provide extra academic enrichment for selected scholars. One school sends all twelfth graders to a 10-week Saturday research methods program at a local university. Another school offers Saturday SAT preparation classes for eleventh graders.

9.4 Curriculum and Instruction

Unlike many educational reforms, the charter school concept is largely silent on particular curricula, assessment, and instructional methods—except to say that many methods used in traditional public schools are insufficient. Instead of prescribing a specific reform package, charter laws carve out an opportunity space in which charter schools may exercise autonomy over such matters. The theory is that such autonomy will leave the schools better able to address the specific needs of the students who choose to enroll in them.

Curriculum. Charter schools' annual reports contain a number of references to curricular practices that school officials regard as innovative. Some reports mention specific courses, such as a school that offers courses on entrepreneurship. Other schools report offering instruction in morals and character. At least one school advertises a focus on the "whole child," including emotional, intellectual, and social development.

In many instances, charter schools' curricula grow out of their particular missions and target populations. At least one school, for instance, attempts to operationalize its vocational focus by offering courses on construction in addition to the "basics"—and has links to the federal Americorps program. Another school with a vocational emphasis offers intensive instruction in computers. Still another has architecture and design as well as writing integrated into its entire curriculum. At the school with aerospace and aviation technology as part of its mission, there is a full-time areospace teacher, and specialists in this area visit regularly to provide instruction. Schools with more traditional academic foci tend to emphasize courses in math, literacy, and science.

A number of schools emphasize particular ethnic and cultural traditions, in keeping with their missions. For example, at least four schools employ an Afrocentric focus; three of these schools collaborate with one another. Other charter schools have a bilingual focus. One charter school includes the goal of students emerging as bilingual by grade 6. It offers Spanish immersion classes starting in kindergarten, with of the major subjects are taught in Spanish. These goals and processes fit with the school's mission of an international focus.

Some schools have curricula that extend beyond the students and encompass the families and/or communities. One school which partners with other social agencies provides social services to families. Another school which had a strong emphasis on inclusively serving students with special needs employed three school-family coordinators. Other schools have an intergenerational approach. One school focuses on educating both children and their parents. Another has a partnership with a senior center where students regularly visit.

Finally, a few Pennsylvania charter schools offer special services that, in some cases, are related to the academic curriculum. For instance, one school with a vocational focus pays its students a stipend, administers drug tests, provides drug intervention strategies, finds them employment after graduation, and follows up on their postgraduation progress.

Teaching methods. Most charter schools included in their annual reports teaching methods that they considered innovative. Interviews with charter school CAOs also addressed teaching innovations. Some mentioned mixed-grade classrooms, while other mentioned theme-based, project-based, and multidisciplinary learning. A number of schools note that they employ various types of hands-on, experiential, and constructivist approaches that emphasize individualized learning strategies. One school reports using dance and music to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Another involves a multidisciplinary "micro-society program", where students build a mini-society, complete with its own laws, currency, and various other features. At least one school has individualized education plans for all students, not just those who qualify for special education services under the federal IDEA.

Again, we emphasize that we were unable to determine the extent to which noncharter public schools employ any of these practices. Also, the structure of the annual report leaves little room for schools to provide detail on these practices—though some include such documentation as appendices. As discussed below, future evaluation activities will include case studies that provide more detailed information on promising practices.

9.5 Technology and Computers

Many proposed school reforms involve computers and other learning technologies. A number of the charter schools CAO's mentioned the use of computers as one of their innovations. Thus, it seems appropriate to explore this issue in some detail. Administrative data available through the School Profiles provides a convenient way to compare the prevalence of computers and Internet connectivity in charter and noncharter schools.

Table 9:2 shows the prevalence of Internet access in various locations of the schools. For all locations, the percentage of charter schools with Internet access is lower than that in all noncharter public schools and host district schools. The gap between charter schools and noncharter public schools is higher than that between charter schools and host district schools. Examination of the data indicated no obvious sources of selection bias.

Table 9:2 Comparison of Internet Access in Charter and Noncharter Public Schools, 2000-01

Location of Internet access	*Percent of Charter Schools (N=65)*	*Percent of Host District Schools (N=757)*	*Percent of Noncharter Public Schools (N=3,332)*
Teacher workrooms	22%	44%	51%
Classrooms	25	65	71
Computer labs	34	65	69
Library	34	70	77
All locations	42	73	83

The charter school annual reports provided by the Office of Educational Initiatives provides a limited number of specific instances of technology use in the schools. One school utilizes a university collaboration for videoconferencing to enhance learning. Another offers technology courses, including a graphics arts and computer design program and, in "2002," a computer networking certification curriculum. Still another school provides each student with a computer to take home and offers computer training to parents as well as students.

We emphasize that neither the quantitative school profiles data nor the qualitative data from the annual reports allows us to assess the degree to which technology is actually being integrated into the curriculum.

9.6 Cyber Schools

The most innovative development in Pennsylvania charter schools is the emergence of cyber charter schools. While the first cyber charter in Pennsylvania, SusQ-Cyber, opened in 1998, the 2001-02 academic year saw a huge expansion in both the number of these schools and the number of students enrolled in them. Perhaps because of the novelty of these schools, disputes over funding and other issues prompted several lawsuits against the cyber charter schools. In October 2002 one cyber charter, Einstein Academy, had its charter revoked by its host district (the school remains open pending appeal to the CAB). The General Assembly reacted to these disputes by reforming the way cyber schools' charters are granted (see Chapter 3) and recognizing them as different from "bricks and mortar" charter schools.

Though the concept of cyber charter schools is innovative, the individual schools' methods are not necessarily so. Cyber charters that depend on written texts and other materials sent through the mail are not much different from traditional correspondence courses. However, other methods of instruction employed by cyber charters are innovative. Cyber charter school students can receive instruction any time of the day. While a few classes "meet" at specified times, typically students can set their own schedule. Most classes use a mix of written materials (such as textbooks) and material delivered through a computer.

Following are other areas of cyber charter school innovation:

- Providing an innovative way to reach at-risk students who have dropped out of traditional schools.
- Offering a wider range of classes to their students. Students can be offered different (often advanced) instruction compared with courses that may be available in their local district's schools.
- Providing structure and assistance to parents who were previously home-schooling their children. Enrolling formerly home-schooled students in cyber schools increases the amount of public oversight and guidance.
- Enabling students with health/medical/social problems that preclude attendance at a traditional school to continue their education from home or from a hospital or rehabilitation center.

Finally, one goal of the charter school law is to provide choice to Pennsylvania parents and students. Simple geography necessarily limits a student's school choices, but cyber charter schools can create choices where none previously existed. Though this choice is limited to students who have a parent or other adult available to supervise instruction, cyber charter schools present choices to many Pennsylvania families who do not live near a bricks and mortar charter school.

9.7 Impacts of Charter Schools on Local Districts

Charter schools were provided lessened regulations and hence, more opportunity space for educational innovations. Ideally, these would not only provide alternative educational programs to families, but would spur the traditional public schools to collaborate and/or compete with these innovative new schools. Thus, theoretically, charter schools could improve the entire public school system. On the other hand, critics feared that charter schools would drain per-pupil funds from the traditional school system. The expectations regarding the impact of the charter school on the district influence the relationships between the two school systems. Conversely, the quality of relationships between the district and the charter school–cooperative, hostile, or indifferent–affects the potential for the types of impact that the charter schools can have on the districts.

It is quite difficult to systematically measure the impact of the charter schools on the respective school districts. We interviewed charter school administrators about their relations with the district and the impact of the charter schools on the district schools. The following paragraphs reflect these anecdotes of impacts as reported by the school administrators.

Indifference characterizes some charter-district relations. A number of the charter school staff stated that there is little communication between them and the district. The CAO of one charter high school stated that there was a large public high school "just about next door" whose students and staff probably didn't even know that the charter school existed. Given that only a tiny proportion of most districts' students attend charter schools, the attrition into charter schools may not have been substantial enough to spur interest, let alone competition for students. These apathetic relations do not bode well for diffusion of innovation.

Relations were generally good in districts where the local schools referred students to the charter schools. This was often the case where charter schools were designed for at-risk or delinquent students; thus they were not seen as competition. On the other hand, the frequent referrals of difficult-to-educate students into charter schools for general populations was sometimes problematic. One charter school director complained about troubled students from the district getting "dumped" into his school; a phenomenon also observed in other states (Sullins & Miron, 2002). A parent from another Pennsylvania charter school expressed, "I feel that quite a few of the children in my son's class have been referred to the school because the public school has thrown its hands in the air. The public school didn't have the resources for these kids so they pushed them on the charter schools." However, such concerns were not widespread.

Some of the districts had negative attitudes towards the charter schools, especially regarding the perceived threat to their enrollment and hence, funds. In one district, relations between the LEA and the charter school were particularly hostile because the charter was granted by the CAB on appeal, against the wishes of the district. This resulted in an ongoing, contentious lawsuit concerning the approval of the charter. Some districts were indeed impacted financially. Portions of one district school closed due to declining enrollment as its students transferred into the charter school. In another district, a school was threatened with closure due to attrition into the charter school. Often, despite real or perceived financial impact, relations between the host and the charter improved over time. In some cases, districts that were originally hostile towards the charter schools not only improved their relationships with them, but began embracing some of their successful practices. Regardless of whether these adoptions of practices were out of a collegial or competitive spirit, they indicate that the charter schools are positively impacting the charter schools. We now describe some of these impacts.

Three of the districts are adopting school uniforms, reportedly in response to their respective charter school's policy on uniforms. A fourth district has contacted the local charter school to inquire about the effects of their school's uniforms on discipline, to help them make decisions regarding a similar policy.

There were several examples of what appeared to be competitive diffusion of innovation, as they occurred in districts that were losing substantial numbers of students to the charter schools. In one district, the local public schools began adopting multi-age classes in response to the charter school's similar program. Another two neighboring districts each initiated an all-day kindergarten in order to prevent attrition to a charter school that had attracted kindergarteners from both districts with its all-day program. Another district offered kindergarten for very young students, apparently in response to a similar program at the charter school. A final example of charter school innovation spilling over into non-charter public schools is the fact that three of the cyber charter schools were started by IUs—at the insistence of their member school districts —directly in response to cyber charters being started by other entities. This last example illustrates a competitive impact, however, because the districts responded by creating cyber charter schools rather than cyber traditional public schools one can argue that this is not an impact on district schools.

Other innovations that were adopted or at least strongly considered by local districts included wraparound services and family counseling, environmental education, and a longer school day or year. Some charters hope the local districts will pick up their unique curricula–for example, programs involving arts, technology, or aerospace programs–but thus far matters have not progressed beyond discussion.

In addition to providing inspirational innovations, the charter schools are providing other opportunities for benefitting the school district as a whole. For example, aspiring educators at one district high school students intern at the charter school. This arrangement enhances both the district and the charter school. In addition, there have been professional development activities that have included both district schools and charter schools. Similar charter-host district collaborations have served both parties in other states as well (Sullins & Miron, 2002). However, such cooperation appears the exception rather than the rule thus far. If relations between charter schools and host districts continue to improve, as they have in many Pennsylvania districts thus far, there will be more opportunities for such collaborations.

9.8 Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter sought to assess the extent to which Pennsylvania's charter schools have succeeded in fulfilling Act 22's mandate that they develop innovative teaching practices that might be emulated by other schools. As we have seen, any attempt to evaluate innovations is hampered by (a) ambiguities in the concept of innovation and (b) data limitations. The Charter Appeals Board provided a considerable amount of clarity on the issue of innovation, holding that a charter school innovation is any practice used by the charter school(s) but not the host district(s). This definition, however, may be problematic in that it makes it more difficult for charter schools located in or near large districts to qualify as innovative. From a research perspective, it requires explicit comparisons between charter schools and host districts. While quantitative data from the school profiles make such comparisons possible on a limited range of items, these comparisons are largely beyond the scope and budget of the present study. The CAB definition of innovation, limitations notwithstanding, provide opportunities for starting charter schools that provide true educational alternatives for families within the district.

Charter schools often differ from their host district schools in terms of size, structure, and schedule. Some of the charter schools had longer days or years than their district schools. Some offered all-day Kindergarten or after-school or Saturday activities. Charter schools may offer different grade level grouping that district schools, or even multi-age groups. Charter schools are usually smaller than their district counterparts, although they are tending to grow in enrollment. At least one school specified that their small school size made curricular and instructional innovations easier to implement.

We found a number of practices in charter schools that might qualify as innovations: theme-based instruction, hands-on teaching methods, project-based learning, the availability of family and vocational support services, and others. However, given that these observations come from charter school annual reports, we are unable to determine the extent to which these practices are prevalent in noncharter public schools.

The most significant charter school trend, in terms of innovation, is the emergence and growth of the cyber charter schools. These schools extend the choice offered by charter schools beyond local neighborhoods to all areas of the Commonwealth. Cyber charter schools offer innovative instructional methods, expanded curricular choices, and opportunities for students who have struggled in traditional school environments.

Successful charter school innovations not only provide alternatives for families, they also inspire district schools to adopt similar approaches. A number of the charter school directors reported that their districts had adopted some of their school's practices; for example, school uniforms or all-day kindergarten. The relation between the charter and the district affects the diffusion of innovation. Indifferent or hostile relations precludes the sharing of ideas. However, sometimes competition spur the districts' imitation of popular charter school approaches in order to stem attrition. In addition to diffusion of innovation, there were a few cooperative arrangements between charters and hosts. However, overall there has been little impact on the districts thus far. Improved district-host relations can amplify the positive impacts. Conversely, increased healthy competition from the charter schools can also spur reform in the districts.

In the final year of this project we plan to subject the self-reported innovation found in the charter school annual reports to a "jury of peers" consisting of education experts and practitioners. This will provide an independent assessment of the level of innovation in the schools (see, e.g., Mintrom, 2000), thus addressing the R&D definition of innovation discussed above. Second, we will conduct in-depth case studies of schools that appear to be engaged in innovative practices. These case studies might also help us determine the extent to which any potentially innovative practices are used by surrounding districts, thus addressing the requirements of the CAB definition of innovation.

Any such improvements in data collection, however, should not obscure the fact that innovation remains a highly contestable concept. Such contestation, ultimately, can be resolved only through democratic debate.

Chapter Ten
Equity and Access

In Chapter 4 we saw that Pennsylvania charter schools tend to be located in relatively large, poor urban communities. In this chapter we assess the extent to which charter schools' student populations reflect their communities' demographic characteristics. The issue of student demographic composition is particularly controversial given skeptics' criticisms that charter schools engage in cream-skimming practices and predictions that the schools will lead to greater segregation by race, ethnicity, and income. Other observers argue, to the contrary, that charter schools and other forms of school choice can reduce segregation by breaking the link between school attendance and residential location (e.g., Coons & Sugarman, 1978).

This chapter examines the extent to which charter school student populations are similar to those of nearby noncharter public schools in terms of race, income, and the concentration of special education students. It is important to state at the outset that we have only anecdotal evidence, including self-reported action taken by a few CAOs, of intentional cream-skimming by Pennsylvania charter schools. Most charter schools are doing an exemplary job of making their schools available to all who are interested. While our data on student composition can identify differences, they cannot determine if these differences are due to practices at the schools. Student composition is a function both of decisions by schools on how to recruit and admit students and families' decisions to apply to the schools. Thus, any charter-noncharter differences in the concentration of such students might simply reflect differences in the types of families seeking to enroll children in the schools. Still, examining student composition can provide evidence that is useful in spotting potential problems with equity and access in charter schools.

This chapter builds on a chapter on student and family characteristics in the October 2000 report. While this chapter looks only at ethnicity, income, and special education data, the earlier chapter also included grade level, age, gender, educational aspirations, parents' education, and a number of other factors. Since we have no new data to report on these parameters of student composition, we refer interested readers to the earlier report.

10.1 Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Charter Schools

Some studies of charter schools have indicated that charter schools are leading to greater segregation based upon race. Cobb and Glass (1999) found that charter schools in Arizona had fewer minorities than the districts in which they lie and that half of the charter schools exhibited evidence of substantial ethnic separation. Miron and Nelson (2002) found that charter schools had similar proportions of minorities as the aggregate of their host districts in Michigan. However, when examining a small number of case districts, they found evidence that charter schools' presence appeared to lead to greater racial segmentation.

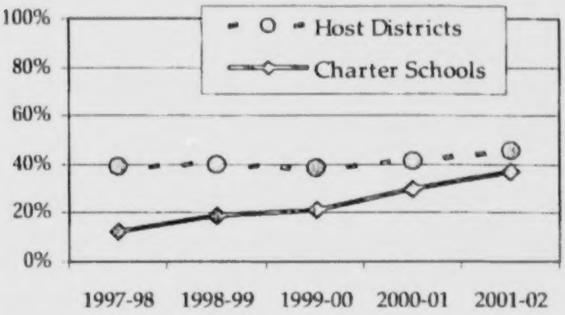

Figure 10:1 Percent White Students Enrolled in Charter Schools and Host Districts

In Pennsylvania, we found that the charter schools, on the whole, enrolled a larger proportion of minority students than did the host districts (i.e., 37 percent white in charter schools and 46 percent white in the host districts). When we look at this over time (see Table 10:1 and Figure 10:1) we can see that the proportion of white students enrolled in charter schools is going up each year. This is largely due to the addition of new schools and not large shifts in existing schools. Likewise, the proportion of white students enrolled in host districts in also increasing over time. This is also due to the inclusion of new host districts outside of urban areas. The most important finding, however, is that the difference between the proportions of whites and minorities in the charter schools is decreasing over time. Back in 1997-98 there was a 27 percent point difference between charter schools and host districts, but in 2001-02 the difference is only 9 percentage points.

Table 10:1 Longitudinal Data for Demographic Variables for the Aggregate of Charter Schools Compared with the Aggregate of Host Districts

	%FRL			%White			%IEP*		
	CS	HD	CS - HD	CS	HD	CS - HD	CS	HD	CS - HD
1997-98	64.8	64.6	0.2	12.0	39.0	-27.0	4.7	11.1	-6.4
1998-99	68.2	62.8	5.4	19.1	40.1	-21.0	4.6	11.6	**-7.0***
1999-00	64.4	62.6	1.7	21.2	38.3	**-17.1***	11.2	13.0	-1.8
2000-01	62.9	57.4	5.5	30.0	41.5	**-11.5***	9.4	17.5	**-8.1***
2001-02	55.9	52.9	3.0	37.0	46.0	-9.0	8.8	17.2	**-8.9***

Note: All figures are weighted by enrollment.
* Percent of students with IEPs includes gifted students.
**Figures in bold text are differences between charter schools and host districts that are statistically discernible at the 0.05 level.

However, there was notable variability among charter schools in the proportion of white and minority students relative to the district. For example,

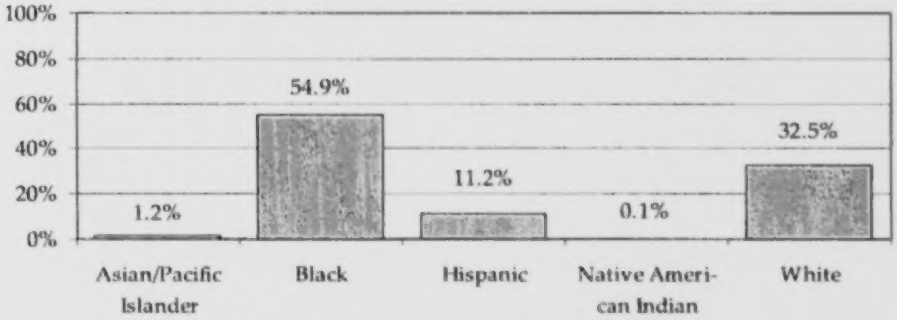

Figure 10:2 Distribution of Charter School Students by Race/Ethnicity in 2001-02

while only 16 percent of Philadelphia's students are white, 94 percent of Philadelphia Academy Charter School's students are white. On the other end of the spectrum, Chester County Family Academy Charter School had only 9 percent white students, although 85 percent of the students in its host district are white. Some schools had an overarching curricular focus on a particular ethnicity, such as African American or Latino. Naturally, these schools attracted a large proportion of students from these respective ethnic groups. In spite of this, most charter schools had higher concentration of nonwhite students than did their host districts. Figure 10:2 illustrates the ethnic/racial composition of charter school students in 2001-02.

Appendix D displays the proportion of white students at each charter school compared with that of its district. For charter schools with multiple sponsors, we created a composition comparison group that is the average proportion of white students of all the sponsoring districts weighted by total district enrollment [1]. When comparing the proportion of minorities school by school, we find that most charter schools enroll a higher proportion of minorities than their host districts.

When it comes to issues of equity in charter schools, ethnicity is but one concern. We now examine the proportion of low-income students that charter schools enroll.

10.2 Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

The picture painted of charter school demographics depends, in large measure, on the methods used. Many studies, including the federally sponsored national studies of charter schools (RPP International, 2000), compare the concentration of low income students in charter schools with that in all noncharter public schools. As we saw in Chapter 4, charter schools generally do not locate randomly across states.[2] Given that charter schools —with some notable exceptions—tend to draw students from their geographical vicinity, the fairest comparison group is sponsoring districts. Therefore, we first compare the average FRL concentration in the charter schools with average FRL concentration in all the host districts.

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[1] Analogous processes were used to create composite comparison groups of host districts with which to compare charter schools' proportions of students qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) and students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

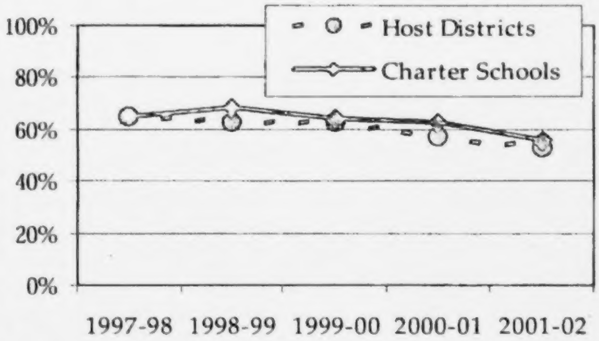

Figure 10:3 Percent of Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch Enrolled in Charter Schools and Host Districts

As Figure 10:3 shows, the proportions of students who qualify for free and reduced lunches are quite similar between charter schools and host districts and have remained rather similar over time. However, a substantial limitation to these data is that numerous charter schools did not report their proportions of FRL students, especially in 1999-00.

More significantly, there is considerable variability among districts. To examine this variability, we compared each charter school's concentration of FRL students with that of its sponsoring district(s). The key variable of interest in our analysis, then, is not the FRL percentage itself, but rather the difference between the charter school and its host district(s). To obtain this variable, we subtracted the relevant host district FRL percentage from each charter school's FRL percentage. Thus, positive values indicate that the charter school enrolls a higher concentration of FRL students than its host district(s), while negative values indicate that the charter school FRL percentage is lower than that of its host district(s).

As of the 2001-02 academic year, the typical Pennsylvania charter school enrolls approximately 1.8 percentage points more FRL students than its host district(s).[3] However, there is considerable variation among schools. At one extreme, one school enrolled 85 percentage points more FRL-eligible students than its host district. At the other end of the spectrum, one school enrolled 73 percentage points fewer FRL students than its host district. Of the 77 charter schools, 44 enrolled a greater percentage of FRL-eligible students than did their respective host districts. Ten of these charter schools enrolled at least 25 percentage points more FRL-eligible students than their respective host districts. Thirty-one charter schools enrolled a lower percentage of FRL-eligible students than their corresponding districts. In 8 of these 31 cases, the difference was less than 10 percentage points; in 6 districts the difference was at least 40 percentage points. Two districts had the same percentage of FRL-eligible students as their charter schools. School-level results can be found in Appendix D.

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[2] Glomm, Harris, and Lo (2000) arrived at similar findings by analyzing data on charter school locations in Michigan and California.

[3] This figure is the average charter-host district difference.

Comparing average household income provides another way to examine the distribution of students in charter schools. The annual family income reported by the sampled parents in 2002 indicated that about 73 percent of the parents had annual family incomes between $20,000 and $100,000, with 7 percent of the families over $100,000. One-fifth of the families had incomes under $20,000 (12.7 percent between $10,000 and $19,999 and 7.2 percent below $10,000). While these figures suggest that the schools cater to a wide range of families, it is interesting to note that the families attending charter schools in 2002 are noticeably more affluent than the families enrolled in charter schools in 2000. One explanation is the addition of new schools which are located in districts with higher family incomes. Again, the overall proportion of FRL-eligible students continues to be similar between the composite of the charter schools and the composite of the districts.

Despite the overarching picture of equity, it is important to point out that several complaints have brought to the Education Law Center regarding practices that could discriminate against families with limited incomes. While charter schools by law cannot charge tuition, allegations have been made about registration fees, requirements that families purchase school uniforms from an expensive mail order company, and requirements that families pay for textbooks. According to a letter from the assistant counsel of PDE dated November 7, 2001, charter schools may require purchases of textbooks or uniforms, as long as ability to pay for a uniform is not a requisite for enrollment. Registration fees, however, may resemble tuition fees and are therefore discouraged. While complaints such as these involve only a few schools, they underline the fact that oversight groups need to be vigilant.

10.3 Enrollment of Students with Disabilities

Race and income are far from the only relevant demographic factors. In this section we compare charter school and host district concentrations of students with special educational needs. For the purposes of this analysis, we consider any student with a formal IEP a special education student.

Analysis of the enrollment of students with disabilities in charter schools was based on data from PDE for the 2001-02 school year; there are data for 71 of the 77 charter schools and for all the districts throughout the state. The average percentage of students with IEPs for the 71 charter schools with available data during the 2001-02 school year was 8.8 percent, compared with 17.2 percent for noncharter public schools. However, when excluding gifted students, the average was 8.5 percent compared with 13 percent for all the noncharter public schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (see Figure 10:4).

As with race and income, there was considerable variability among the charter schools in terms of the proportion of students with IEPs that they enrolled. Of the 71 schools that reported IEP data, 53 schools enrolled a lower proportion of students with IEPs than the state average. Ten schools had fewer than 3 percent of their students with IEPs. At the other extreme, 18 of the 71 charter schools had a higher proportion of students with disabilities than the state average. The overall aggregate for the charter schools was weighted by the presence of 2 schools with 36 percent and 100 percent of their students with IEPs.

PDE data for the 2001-02 school year included information on the types of charter school students' disabilities (see Figure 10:5). The two categories of disabilities that comprised more than 1 percent of total charter school student enrollment were specific learning disability (5.4 percent) and speech and language impairment (1.6 percent). Charter schools ranged from 0 percent to 23.3 percent on students with specific learning disabilities. Percentages of charter school students with speech and language impairments ranged from 0 percent to 7.7 percent.

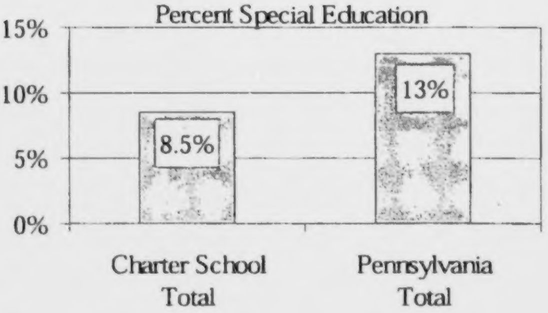

Figure 10:4 Special Education Enrollments for Charter Schools and the Commonwealth, 2001-02 (Note: Excludes gifted students)

There is a dramatic difference in the proportion of charter school students who require IEPs for giftedness. The percentage of gifted students was far higher in the noncharter schools (4.2 percent) than in the charter schools (0.2 percent). This provides at least some evidence against claims that charter schools are "creaming" gifted students from the public schools. However, gifted students often require their own programs and support services and may be just as difficult to accommodate in a school as children with mild disabilities.

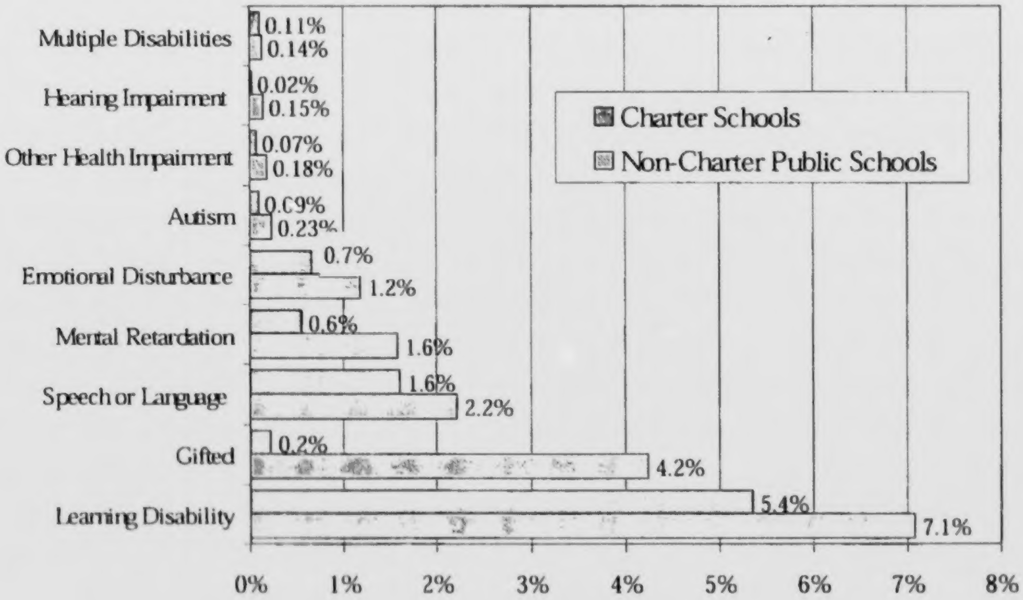

Figure 10:5 Percentage of Enrolled Students With IEPs by Category

Figure 10.5 does not include disabilities that affect less than 0.10 percent of the students in the districts. Less than 0.10 percent of the students in both the district and charter schools had IEP's for orthopedic impairment, visual impairment (including blindness), or traumatic brain injury. Less than 0.01 percent of the students in both the district and the charter schools had developmental delays or deaf-blindness. However, within each of these five categories the percentage of students was higher for the district public schools.

Among all the charter school students with IEP's, what types of disabilities are they most likely to have? Figure 10:6 displays the proportion of all special education students in specific categories, comparing charter school students with district students. We see that charter schools– although they had fewer special education students altogether– had a higher concentration of students than other Pennsylvania public schools in four categories: specific learning disability, speech and language impairment, severe emotional disturbance, and multiple disabilities. The first two are considered relatively easy and inexpensive to accommodate.

The categories of serious emotional disturbance, mental retardation, and autism/pervasive development disorder each accounted for less than 1 percent of the total charter school student population. However, 3 charter schools – Ridgeview Academy, GECAC, and Spectrum–had more than 10 percent of their students in 1 or more of these categories.

Officials at Spectrum Charter School indicated that all 21 of its students receive special education. Spectrum's mission is to educate children with unique cognitive, communication, and sensory challenges, including students with autism spectrum disorders. Fully 71 percent of Spectrum's students had mental retardation. Administrators at GECAC pride themselves on being the only "fully

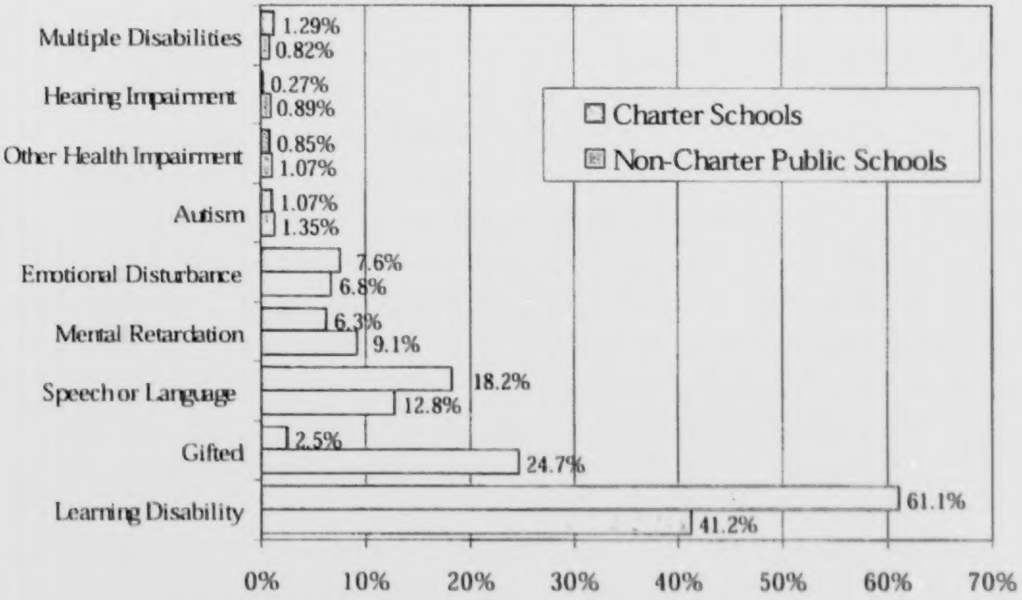

Figure 10:6 Distribution of Students With Disabilities by Category

inclusive" charter school in the state. Around 28-30 percent of its students had special needs, and the school was constantly developing innovative accommodations. Examples of their inclusiveness were observed during site visits. Two middle-school students with conspicuous developmental disabilities, whose behavior would be disruptive in most school settings, were treated with patient redirection from the staff and calm acceptance by their fellow students. However, staff at this school, as well as numerous other charter schools, complained that they lacked the human and material resources to optimally meet all their students' special needs.

Charter schools in several states face questions regarding the fact that they enroll lower proportions of students with disabilities; thus, this issue is not unique to Pennsylvania. Some of the Pennsylvania charter schools are serving as models for inclusion and should be commended for their interests in serving students with greater needs and students whose needs were not being addressed in the traditional public schools. Nevertheless, on the whole, over time the charter schools have not closed the gap in terms of their enrollment of students with special educational needs (see Figure 10:7).

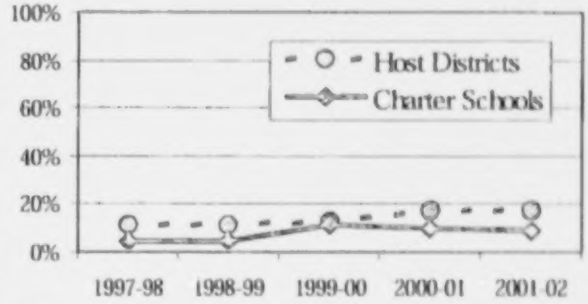

Figure 10:7 Proportion of Students with Disabilities in Charter Schools and Host Districts
Note: These figures include gifted students

10.4 Satisfaction of Parents of Children with Special Needs

Our 2001-02 surveys found that parents of students with special needs were generally just as satisfied as other parents. A Pearson correlation demonstrated essentially no correlation ® = .01, *p* = .70) between parents' stated importance of "my child had special needs that were not met at previous school" as a reason for enrolling their child in a charter school, and their satisfaction with instruction (see Chapter 13, pp. 154-155, for details on the index measuring parents' satisfaction with instruction). Most parents were satisfied with services, with 66.7 percent marking "true" and another 21.3 percent marking "partly true" in response to the item, "Support services. . . are available to my child." Overall, there was a very small but statistically discernable gap in fulfillment of initial expectations for and current experience with support services (Wilcoxian Z= -2.073, p = .038).

Looking closer, there are a wide range of charter schools' abilities to fulfill students' special needs. On one hand, some parents complained that their students' special needs were not being met. Special education may be particularly problematic during a charter school's start-up year, when the complex statewide special education laws may not be implemented optimally. One charter school parent complained that "Because it is in its 'pilot' year, we did not always receive communication on policies in a timely fashion. Special ed support–slow to respond, lacking organization." On the other hand, some parents were enthusiastic about how well their charter schools were addressing their children's special needs. For example,

> *Their ability to teach students to their highest levels of achievement through "TRUE" IEP. They are committed to succeeding... This charter school saved my son's life. If it were not for them, my sons greatest strength would be fantasy based living. His previous school insisted he could not learn. Change is a wonderful experience: especially when the so called normal ways fail us.*

Cyber-schools were expected to meet the needs of students whose disabilities precluded them from succeeding in a regular public school. One student expressed enthusiasm about how her cyber-school's flexible schedule accommodated her chronic health condition. However, one parent reported extreme difficulty in getting her child's special needs met through a cyber-school. She described the biggest problem with the school as follows:

> *Administration! Not ever able to get a response from staff; some teachers respond but administration never does. Promises make and broken. My son could not read (5th grade!) and I spoke to someone in the office, FINALLY got a hold of special ed. Teacher, signed permission forms to have him evaluated and NEVER heard back. It is IMPOSSIBLE to get any answers or responses or help with anything. Some teachers are great, most are not. We were not able to communicate with staff. . . . I cannot figure out why this school is permitted to operate. We were without a science teacher (5th grade) for months. My 5th grader struggles with LD and I haven't been able to get help or an evaluation. I had to go out on my own, teach him to read and try to adapt the curriculum for him. Materials were late getting to us, some never got to us. It was a terribly difficult year. We will NEVER "cyber-school" again. We will be homeschooling next year.*

It is unclear whether this family's experience with a cyber-school is typical among students with special needs or is a rare aberration.

In short, some charter schools appear highly successful in serving students with special needs, while others appear unable (or according to some critics, unwilling) to serve such students. It is worth further examination of charter schools' strengths and barriers to serving students with special needs, particularly in schools with radical new formats such as cyber-schools.

10.5 Why Students Leave Charter Schools

As schools of choice, it is virtually inevitable that each charter school will lose at least some students whose needs may be better met elsewhere. One concern is whether students with special needs or who are from a different ethnic background or socioeconomic group than the majority of their school may be more likely to leave, thus contributing to a school's homogeneity. Such a pattern could indicate that the school is not meeting the needs of all its students in an equitable manner. To the extend feasible, we examined the rates and the reasons for student turnover.

We had limited data regarding the rate of student withdrawal at the charter schools. PDE provided us with the data they had received from 41 of the 77 charter schools regarding the number of new students enrolling after the start of the school year and the number of students that left during the school year (See also Chapter 6). The overall charter school withdrawal rate (13.5 percent of enrollment) was comparable to that of the host districts (15.3 percent). Again, variability among charter schools was quite wide. Some schools reported withdrawal rates below 1 percent; at the other extreme, a school reported that more than half of its students had withdrawn.

While data regarding the turnover rates of students was somewhat limited, information concerning reasons why students transfer out of charter schools was far more limited. Interviews with charter school staff indicated a few noteworthy trends. In many cases, students' families simply transferred out of town. Metropolitan areas tend to have high mobility rates, regardless of what type of school their children attend. When students leave the charter schools but stay within their district area, most transfer back to the district-operated public schools while others transfer to other alternative schools. Seven percent of the parents surveyed in our study had enrolled their children in other charter schools previously.

Discipline problems are an occasional reason for turnover in some schools; students may be "counseled out" or even expelled. Several complaints were made to the Education Law Center regarding students with ADHD or similar disabilities getting asked to leave the charter schools because of an inability to control their behavior. Our data are insufficient to determine whether such actions indicated discrimination against students with unmet behavioral needs or necessary precautions to protect the safety and well-being of the other students. Further, we lack data to determine whether such controversies are more prevalent in charter schools than in traditional public schools. Moreover, we emphasize that these complaints have been limited to a small number of schools.

In other cases, especially in charter schools that cater to high-risk high school students, students drop out of school completely. Further studies could examine the effectiveness of charter schools geared toward high-risk students and how they can further increase graduation rates.

Some charter schools were designed for delinquent or adjudicated youth, with re-entry into the main public school as a goal. Many of the students who enrolled in cyber schools because of difficulties in the district-operated public schools also planned to return to traditional public schools. In such cases, high proportions of students returning to public schools may be an indicator of success rather than failure with these special populations.

Some students transferred into a district magnet school once they reached a certain grade level, even if the charter school included these same grade levels. For these students the charter school seemed to be a "pit stop" on the way to their middle school or high school of choice - preferable to the traditional school system but not their first choice.

Some schools had high turnover of students during their start-up year or years, but retention improved as the school matured. At times, the directors of these schools implied that the schools were rather tumultuous during their start-up years, but eventually became more adept at meeting students' and families' needs. There were no indications of the types of students most likely to leave these schools.

While some charter school CAOs acknowledged that student and/or parental dissatisfaction was sometimes a reason for attrition, very few presented specific reasons for consumer dissatisfaction. Following up on families who had transferred out of charter schools was beyond the scope of our study. At this point, we found no indications of students leaving due to issues concerning race or SES level. Parents of students with special needs generally appear satisfied, but there were a few anecdotal accounts of parents transferring their students out of charter schools because of the schools' inability to meet their students' special needs. Further studies will be needed to determine whether these are exceptional occurrences or a widespread problem.

10.6 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter examined the ethnic composition of charter school students; the concentration of charter school students eligible for free or reduced lunch (FRL), a common indicator of poverty or low income status; and the percentage of charter school students with special educational needs as measured by the proportion of students with individual education plans (IEPs).

During the first year of the charter school law implementation, the proportion of nonwhite students in charter schools was much higher than it was in the corresponding school districts. Since then, the proportion of white students has increased each year and has almost caught up with the host districts. Further, in recent years districts with a larger proportion of white students have hosted charter schools. However, there is great variability among charter schools' ethnic makeup. Some charter schools are virtually all African American or Latino, while others serve a much higher proportion of white students than their district schools.

In general, the typical charter school had a similar proportion of FRL students as the typical host district. However, there is considerable variation, with some charter schools having far fewer FRL students and others having far more than their respective host districts.

Charter schools also had a lower percentage of special education students than did all Pennsylvania public schools. The percentage of charter school students with IEPs (excluding gifted students) was 8.5, while the percentage of all public school students with IEPs was 13. Among the enrolled students with disabilities, charter schools were more likely to enroll students with mild disabilities, while districts were more likely to enroll students with moderate or severe disabilities. As with ethnicity and FRL concentration, individual charter schools varied greatly in their percentage of special education students.

Charter/noncharter differences in ethnicity, FRL, and special education are due - in large part - to parent self-selection. Charter schools are schools of choice, and one important intent of the charter school law was to provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available. This element of choice allows that characteristics of students in charter schools will differ from the surrounding traditional public schools.

In our earlier evaluation of Pennsylvania charter schools (Miron & Nelson, 2000), we devoted a whole chapter to special education and charter schools and discussed a number of possible reasons why parents would choose *not* to enroll their child with special needs in a charter school. These included the newness of the schools, lower levels of spending on instruction, shortage of certified special education teachers, etc. Another reason is that children with special needs and their parents are likely to have established relationships with teachers, special education supervisors, and aides in district-operated schools and are less likely to leave those schools for a start-up school. Finally, large organizations, like school districts, are likely to be more capable of meeting the needs of students that require expensive and complex support, equipment, or services than small organizations like charter schools.

Thus far, there has been little evidence of students from minority groups, from low income families, or with special needs leaving charter schools at a higher rate than other students. Further, our surveys show that parents with children enrolled in a charter school are generally satisfied with special services and instruction, regardless of whether or not their students have special needs. Although most charter schools are doing an exemplary job of making their schools available to all who are interested, there have been isolated references to covert discrimination on the part of individual charter schools, such as charging enrollment fees that are prohibitive to low-income families, counseling out students before they enroll in the school, repeatedly suspending students who don't accept the rigor of instruction, or wrongfully expelling students with behavioral disabilities.

Incidents such as these are not limited to charter schools, since traditional public schools are also under pressure to raise test scores while also facing restrictions on budgets. Given that charter schools are more autonomous than traditional public schools, it should come as no surprise that this also occurs in charter schools.

In its guidance provided to charter schools and in the workshops it has facilitated for charter school leaders, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has made it clear that it is against the law for charter schools to discriminate against students with disabilities.[4]

The gaps in enrollment patterns in individual charter schools and occasional complaints might indicate equity issues. Given the importance (and controversial nature) of equity in charter schools, these issues deserve further exploration. These issues also highlight the importance of oversight by districts that grant charters.

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[4] "All resident children in this Commonwealth qualify for admission to a charter school within the provision of subsection (b)." 24 P.S. §17-1723-A(a). Not only do all students qualify for admission, charter schools may not discriminate based on ability: "A charter school shall not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of academic ability, except as provided in paragraph (2), or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a person with a disability, proficiency in the English language or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district." 24 P.S. §17-1723-B(1). Discrimination of this kind is most serious as it could lead to many penalties, including the revocation of a school's charter, 24 P.S. §17-1729-A(5).

Chapter Eleven
Accountability and Oversight

Act 22 states that a charter school "shall be accountable to the parents, the public and the Commonwealth" [24 P.S. §1715-A(2)]. Charter school accountability to parents is achieved largely through parents "voting with their feet" and enrolling their child(ren) in, or removing them from, a charter school. Accountability to the public and the commonwealth manifests itself through various reports, tests, and evaluations designed to monitor and measure charter school performance.

This chapter begins by addressing the various components of the Commonwealth's charter school accountability plan. Next, we discuss accountability as it relates to a charter school's mission. We then address how clearly charter schools are delineating their goals and examine how they relate to their mission statement. Finally, we explore whether or not the goals are measurable and examine the scope of evidence used to ascertain the status of their goals.

11.1 Accountability Plan for Pennsylvania Charter Schools

The accountability plan for Pennsylvania charter schools has a number of components that cover the various aspects of accountability. The seven most distinct components of the accountability plan are as follows:

1. Annual report to PDE and host districts as required by 24 P.S. sec. 17-1728-A(b)
2. Student performance on state achievement test
3. Local and state audits
4. Annual financial report
5. Federal grant monitoring visitations
6. School profiles
7. External evaluation by The Evaluation Center

Charter school accountability includes, but is not limited to, students' scholastic achievement. We distinguish three areas for accountability: (i) *performance accountability*, (ii) *regulatory accountability*, and (iii) *market accountability*

Performance accountability refers to the understanding that charter schools will be accountable for achieving the goals and objectives established in the charter contract. These goals and objectives should reflect the school's mission and they should be measurable. If they are not measurable, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine if they were achieved. Student improvement, in terms of learning and performance on standardized tests, is the most important of these goals and objectives. The publicly available results on the state achievement tests as well as the annual reports that charter schools submit to PDE comprise two forms of reporting on performance accountability.

Regulatory accountability refers to compliance with existing and applicable rules and regulations. The local and state audits, the annual financial report, and the federal grant monitoring visitations are examples of how this form of accountability is being reviewed. The annual reports to PDE also address some aspects of regulatory accountability.

Market accountability refers to the market aspect of this reform where parents are consumers who choose a commodity (i.e., a school for their children). If parents are not satisfied, they will move their child(ren) to another school, and money will follow the child. Schools are suppliers or producers of the commodity in question and, in the education marketplace, the demand will increase for good producers. Charter schools that do not perform well will have few parents choosing to enroll their children and therefore will receive little public funding. According to this logic, poor performing schools will be closed when there is a lack of demand, and schools that perform well will receive more students and more of the public funds that follow the students. Indicators of market accountability are the number of students enrolled in the school (have all places available been filled?) and the size of the waiting list (how many applied but could not get in due to the limited number of available places?).

One important component of the Commonwealth's accountability plan for its charter schools is the external evaluations commissioned by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). In 1998, PDE contracted with The Evaluation Center to conduct an initial evaluation of charter schools. This evaluation was formative in nature and aimed to provide feedback to schools for improvement as well as information for policymakers and oversight agencies to help them strengthen the reform. Act 22 requires that an external evaluation take place five years after the start of the charter school reform. This legislatively mandated evaluation was also contracted to The Evaluation Center and began in April 2001 and will end in October 2003.

11.2 Mission-Driven Schools

PDE requires charter school applicants to "describe the core philosophy or underlying purpose of the proposed school" (PDE, 2001b). The department mandates annual reports, and each charter school is required to list its mission, refer to specific research or philosophical convictions that drive the charter school's mission, describe how the mission statement drives decision making at the school, and describe how the curriculum matches the school's mission.

Our review of school mission statements reveals wide variations. In order to simplify exposition, we have identified nine core themes. Most mission statements include more than one theme. We have excluded student achievement from our list, since almost all mission statements refer to it in one way or another. The most common themes included the following:

- ☐ college preparatory
- ☐ science and technology
- ☐ bilingual and bicultural education
- ☐ family and community
- ☐ discipline and responsibility
- ☐ leadership
- ☐ at-risk students
- ☐ career focus
- ☐ lifelong learning

As one would expect, these themes tend to appear in clusters. That is, mission statements that include one theme are more likely to also include a related or similar theme. With some exceptions, schools targeting at-risk students tend to reside in low income communities. Moreover, schools targeting at-risk students are more likely than others to emphasize character, community service, other values, and preparation for work. Finally, schools targeting lower grade levels are slightly more likely to focus on character issues, while schools focusing on higher grade levels are slightly more likely to focus on science, technology, and bilingual education.

Our review of charter school mission statements suggests that Pennsylvania charter schools provide a reasonably wide variety of educational choices. A diversity of choices in school profiles is crucial for meaningful school choice.

For more details about stakeholders' perceptions and level of satisfaction with their mission statement, see chapters 6, 7, and 13.

11.3 Demonstrating Success: Goals and Objectives Based on Mission Statement

PDE requires information about a prospective charter school's goals (both academic and nonacademic) in an application for the charter. The application seeks "clear goals with measurable objectives" (PDE, 2001b) and asks how the goals will be measured. PDE's required annual reports include a listing of charter school goals, descriptive information, and evidence about the attainment of goals. One component of these annual reports also asks how the goals are related to Pennsylvania standards of performance (PDE, 2001a).

We analyzed the stated goals and objectives contained in the charter school annual reports submitted to PDE in August 2001 and August 2002. Our analysis first considered the number of goals noted in the annual report. Then we examined the nature of these goals in terms of whether they addressed academic or nonacademic objectives and whether they were process goals or outcome goals. We also assessed how measurable the objectives were. Finally, we examined the appropriateness of the evidence regarding whether or not the goals were met.

A major limitation is that some schools may have presented their goals and the status of attainment in different sections in their annual reports. We can only comment on what was presented to us in the given format. If the pages that we were presented made a specific reference to data elsewhere, we assumed that they were present. When it was ambiguous whether documentation existed elsewhere, cells were left blank. If a school did not have any goals listed, we did not include them in our analyses. In 2001, 61 schools (of the 66 that were open throughout the 2000-01 year) provided complete data regarding goals in their annual reports. The following year, a total of 65 schools (of the 76 that were open throughout the 2001-02 year) provided data regarding their goals.

Number of goals. According to the contents of the 2000-01 annual reports, the charter schools averaged about 5 goals and/or objectives. Some schools reported only 1 objective, while 1 school reported 13 objectives. Given the wide-reaching mission of the charter schools, the number of goals and objectives indicated in the 2000-01 annual reports seemed insufficient.

The following year PDE revised its annual report format, which gave more emphasis and space to the reporting goals as well as the status of each of the listed goals. The mean number of goals in the 2001-02 reports increased to 7.5, with a range of 1 to 58. Not surprisingly, the 17 schools that utilized the old annual report format had substantially fewer goals listed than the schools that used the new format. Further, it was often difficult to quantify the goals listed in the old report format. Presumably, because the space for listing goals was so limited, it was often filled with compound sentences that obscured each measurable goal. For example "empower students to strengthen their critical thinking, problem solving, social and creative skills" could be seen as either 1, 3, or 4 goals depending on interpretation. The new template suggested that each goal was a separate unit with its own specific status of attainment. Interestingly, there were 9 rows on the template, and the modal number of goals listed was 9. Four schools used their own unique templates, including the school that listed 58 goals.

Academic or nonacademic nature of objectives. We examined the degree to which a school's goals and objectives are academic vs. nonacademic by determining the percentage that fell into one or the other category. Therefore, if a given school's annual report listed 10 objectives and 8 of them addressed academic goals, then 80 percent of the schools' objectives would be academic and 20 percent would be nonacademic. Some examples of academic goals include the following:

- ☐ Students will exceed Pennsylvania state standards.
- ☐ School level results on the PSSA will increase across all grades and subjects.
- ☐ Students will develop their ability to master subject matter and achieve academically.
- ☐ All students will speak and write fluently in at least one world language.
- ☐ Students will expand their knowledge of their own culture and those of other nations.

Examples of nonacademic goals include the following:

- ☐ Students will learn social skills.
- ☐ The school will promote character education and teach students about honesty and responsibility.
- ☐ Students will develop feelings of self-worth.

☐ Students will learn and demonstrate respect for the rules of society.

☐ Students will develop "soft skills" including teamwork, punctuality, and perseverance.

These examples, although they are paraphrased, are based on actual charter school goals found in the annual reports. In 2000-01 we found that around 61 percent of the goals were academic in nature, while 39 percent addressed nonacademic goals. These nonacademic goals often referred to aspects of the school mission. In 2001-02, approximately 57 percent of the goals were academic, while 43 percent were nonacademic. Again, the nonacademic outcomes often involved other aspects of the school's mission, such as discipline.

Process goals vs. outcome goals. Given that the annual report is intended for an external audience and given that these reports are an important component of the Commonwealth's accountability plan, we would expect the goals and objectives to focus on outcomes. This, however, was not always the case.

We rated the degree to which a school's goals are process goals vs. outcome goals. A school identifying goals that were completely process-related would rate 100 percent for process and 0 percent for outcome. A school identifying goals that were evenly divided between process and outcome would rate 50 percent for process and 50 percent for outcome. Examples of process goals include those listed below:

☐ The school will establish a standards-based curriculum.

☐ The school will integrate technology into all classes.

☐ There will be no more than 26 students per class.

☐ The school will implement a longer school day.

☐ The school will select a standardized test that aligns with the Pennsylvania state standards.

☐ The school will hire a full-time reading specialist.

Examples of outcome goals include these:

☐ Students will demonstrate progress with a significant percentage of IEP objectives.

☐ Students will develop a sense of self-discipline.

☐ Children will master or exceed age-appropriate skill development in mathematics.

☐ Students will achieve in excess of one year's growth each year based on a variety of valid assessments.

☐ Eighty percent of students will demonstrate a gain in their Terra Nova math scores.

☐ The number of violent incidents will decrease.

Charter schools are given greater autonomy in determining how the schools will operate as well the curriculum they will use and the instructional methods that will be utilized. In exchange for this autonomy, the schools are accountable for outcomes. For this reason, the process goals should be of little or no interest to oversight agencies. What is important is whether or not the charter schools are achieving the outcomes promised. Therefore, in the annual report we should expect to see only outcome goals. The process-oriented goals might be mentioned in some sections of the report including improvement plans or plans for the coming year. They should not be included among the general goals and objectives.

Our breakdown of the reported goals for the 1999-00 reports found that 57 percent were process-oriented goals and 43 percent were outcome goals. The following year's reports yielded very similar findings, with 58 percent process-oriented goals and 42 percent outcome goals. This suggests that the charter schools still need to be clearer in the way they present their goals in the annual reports.

However, the average number of goals per school increased about 36 percent from 2001 to 2002. Thus, schools tended to report more outcome goals and more process goals. Again, the modal number of goals was 9, the same as the number of rows on the template regarding goals and status of attainment. The school staff may have felt obligated to fill all 9 rows with goals and thus included less relevant, process-oriented goals.

Scope of coverage. We rated the extent to which a charter school's reported goals covered the various aspects of the school's mission (see Figure 11:1). We rated each charter school on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 referring to no goals or

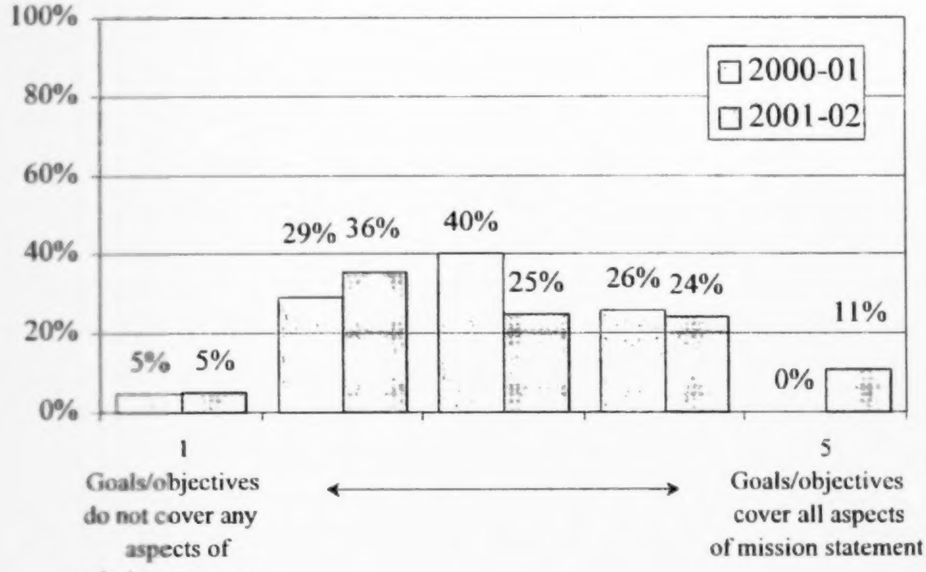

Figure 11:1 Ratings of Goals and Objectives in Terms of the Scope and Coverage of School Mission

objectives related to the mission statement and 5 equivalent to all aspects of the mission statement addressed by goals and objectives. Given that many mission statements were quite nebulous, it was difficult to reliably assess what proportion of each mission statement was covered by its respective goals.

Our analysis of the 2000-01 reports indicated that the schools had a mean score of 2.9. More than 60 percent of charter schools rated 3 or 4, while slightly fewer than 5 percent rated 1. None of the schools received a 5. The 2001-02 reports had a mean score of 3.0, with 5 percent receiving a score of 1 and 10.5 percent receiving a score of 5. Reliability issues notwithstanding, this indicates some improvement in terms of scope and coverage.

Measurability of goals and objectives. We obtained the charter school mission statements and goals from information reported in each school's annual reports to PDE. It is likely that many charter schools have specified goals in addition to those enumerated in these annual reports. The charter school application calls for "clear goals with measurable objectives," which are essential if the annual report is going to serve as an accountability mechanism. For example, if goals are measurable, one can review or collect information to determine if the school is living up to its contract; if the goals and objectives are not measurable, this is nearly impossible.

Therefore, we rated the measurability of charter school goals. Again, we rated each school on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low measurability and 5 referring to a high degree of measurability. A goal such as "decrease suspensions by 25 percent from the previous year" would likely receive a 5 because it specifies a clear and objective indicator and includes a benchmark or cutoff point. A goal such as "create a school with pathways that emphasize math, science, and technology" would probably receive a 1.

Results from our analysis of the goals and objectives in the 2000-01 annual reports had a mean score of 1.7. Only 3 percent of schools rated 4, and no schools rated 5. More than half of the schools received a rating of 1, which indicates that none of their mentioned goals or objectives were measurable. However, there was a dramatic increase in measurability scores the following year, with the mean score rising to 3.8. For the 2001-02 annual reports, only 11 percent scored 1, while 43 percent scored 5. However, possible interrater reliability issues must be taken into consideration. Figure 11:2 illustrates our findings regarding the measurability of the goals and objectives.

As stated earlier, outcome-oriented goals are far more relevant to demonstrating a charter school's success than process-oriented goals. However, process-oriented goals are often more easily measurable than outcome-oriented goals. The measure may be as simple and straightforward as, "was it done or not done?" Outcome-based goals are sometimes challenging to measure, especially goals regarding expansive concepts such as raising students' self-esteem. Finding the right measure and sources of evidence with which to measure progress on such goals may be difficult.

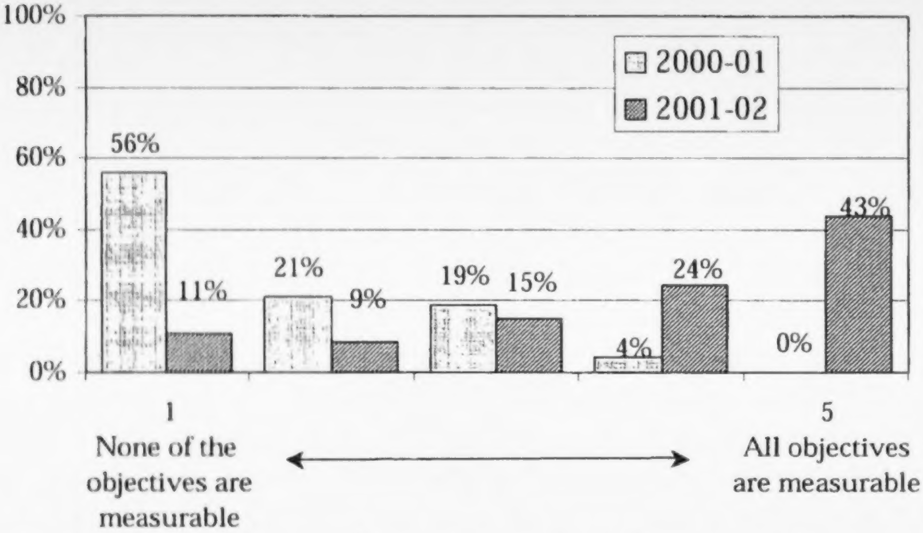

Figure 11:2 Degree of Measurability of Charter School Goals and Objectives

Scope of evidence. The quality and scope of the evidence used to ascertain fulfillment of a goal is also crucial. However, the annual reports for 2000-01 demonstrated that the schools often had difficulty with this concept. Frequently, progress on goals—even concrete, outcome-based goals—was erroneously "measured" by describing the processes used to approach them. For example, a school may list as a goal, "75 percent of students will pass the PSSA" but list as evidence for status of attainment, "A remedial program was initiated." The latter describes a process used to approach the goal, but provides no information regarding whether or not the goal was met. Clear evidence would include the percentage of students who passed the PSSA. At times, there was no clear link between the goal and the evidence used to assess its status. For example, one school's goal was to "Raise students' academic achievement and improve their attitudes towards school so that they achieve the recognized standard." Status on this goal was measured with "Increased attendance by 3 percent."

As Figure 11:3 displays, our assessment of the scope of evidence for the charter schools' goals appears rather polarized. Some schools (27.9 percent) had clear evidence regarding process on all their goals; these were given a rating of 5. Some schools (30.9 percent) provided no evidence at all or provided evidence that was irrelevant to progress on the goals. These schools were given a rating of 1. Schools where evidence was somewhat clear and comprehensive, or had clear evidence for some goals but not others, received ratings of 2 through 4.

Again, scope of evidence was but one element by which the quality of the goals were assessed. All the components of each goal work together to create reports with which charter schools can accurately report the status of their progress. Some schools did an excellent job in describing measurable, outcome-oriented goals that provided an adequate scope of evidence to determine whether

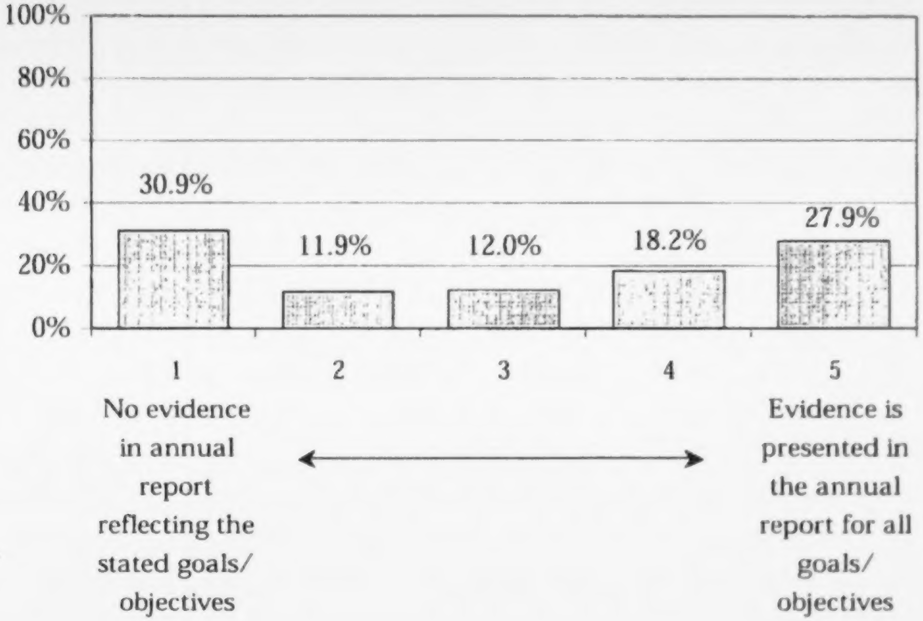

Figure 11:3 Scope of Evidence in the 2001-02 Annual Reports Relevant to the Stated Goals and Objectives

or not they were meeting their goals. However, these schools were in the minority. Most schools provided insufficient evidence to determine whether or not they were living up to their intended outcomes. Therefore, we cannot yet state that Pennsylvania charter schools as a whole are demonstrating performance accountability. On the other hand, the improvements in the annual reports from 1999-00 to 2000-01 suggest that the charter schools are improving the development and reporting on adequately measurable goals.

It is important to note the differences in the quality of reported goals depending on whether the old or new annual report format was used. As Table 11:1 displays, the ratings for the scope of coverage, measurability, and scope of evidence were all significantly ($p < .001$) higher for the schools that used the new form. Four schools used their own template; these schools were not included in this analysis due to their widely varying styles and content. We presume that a more consistent use of this new form may lead to a more consistently high quality of reporting on goals and attaining them.

Additional improvements could be made to these templates; for example, clearer explanations of the concepts or labels used and more specifically defined expectations. Model responses or examples may be quite helpful. Further, technical assistance should be available to schools that have difficulty developing and assessing progress on measurable outcome goals. When the reports are improved and contain truly measurable objectives and specific data on attaining these objectives, the annual reports can become an accountability tool that provides evidence on attaining mission-related objectives. This type of evidence is needed to complement the more readily available student achievement results.

Table 11:1 Quality of Goals by Type of Form Used for Reporting Goals and Status of Attainment in 2001-02 Annual Report

	Old Format (N = 15) Mean (SD)	*New Format (N= 46)* Mean (SD)
Scope of Coverage	2.1 (0.6)	3.2 (1.1)
Measurability	2.1 (1.1)	4.4 (1.0)
Scope of Evidence	1.6 (1.2)	3.6 (1.5)

11.4 Findings From the Auditor General

The Pennsylvania Auditor General (AG) conducts school audits to ensure that districts receive accurate state funding, that state funds are spent according to applicable laws and regulations, and that the operations guiding their expenditures are proper. The audits also aid school administrators in identifying ways to improve certain recordkeeping procedures. Since 1997, the AG has produced audits of 21 charter schools, including the 6 that opened during the 1997-98 school year, 14 that opened during the 1998-99 school year (1 schools had its charter revoked after 1 year of operation), and 1 school that opened during the 1999-00 school year (this school closed in 2002 after having its charter revoked). The audits, covering the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years for the first 6 schools, and the 1998-99 and 1999-00 school years for the other 15, focused on the following areas:

- School records supporting membership
- School records supporting health services
- School records supporting grants
- School records supporting Social Security, Medicare, and retirement contributions
- School insurance and bond coverage
- Minutes of the school's board of trustees meetings
- School professional certification

Since charter schools operate under a different set of laws and regulations than do traditional public schools, the audits of charter schools focused on slightly different areas. The charter school audits had the following objectives:

- To determine whether the school complied with certification requirements for charter schools

- To determine whether the school received the funds to which it was entitled directly from the state and through the payments from school districts mandated by 24 P.S. § 17-1725-A
- To determine whether the school complied with applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines falling within the scope of the audit

Each audit produced findings regarding a school's weakness in specific areas. The most common finding concerned the level of professional certification for charter school staff (see Table 11:2). Seven charter schools were found to have weaknesses in their compliance with the 75 percent professional staff certification requirement. There is a difference in the way the AG and PDE construe the 75 percent requirement. PDE, under its "Cluster Certification" Statement of Policy, permits the assignment within curriculum clusters of certificated persons who possess the qualifications consistent with achieving the school's educational objectives. The AG's position is that the charter school law requires that at least 75 percent of the professional staff members of a charter school hold state certification in their area of administrative responsibility or the subject area in which they teach. The audits identify charter schools that failed to meet the 75 percent mark under each standard.

Following are some of the other findings from the charter school audits:

- Eleven of the 21 charter schools failed to meet the 75 percent mark even under the "cluster certification" standard.
- Fourteen of the 21 charter schools had some finding of weakness in their reporting of student membership information. Many of these errors stemmed from inexperience or lack of training with PDE reporting forms.
- Twelve of the 21 charter schools had some finding of weakness in reporting financial information. Most issues concerned incorrect reporting of Social Security, Medicare, or retirement information.
- Three of the 21 charter schools had some finding of weakness in documenting student instructional time.
- Two of the 21 charter schools had a finding of weakness in student health services. Both schools had failed to hire or contract with a school nurse.
- Two of the 21 charter schools had some finding of weakness in maintaining proper documentation of board meetings and minutes.
- Two of the 21 charter schools had some finding of weakness in all areas except board meeting records.

Some areas of deficits, however, are similar between district schools and charter schools.

- Eight of the 15 host districts had some finding of weakness in certification.
- Eight of the 15 host districts had some finding of weakness in reporting financial information. This included incorrect reporting of retirement wages, improper control of student activity funds, and failure to remove students from active role, resulting in overpayments.

- Six of the 15 host districts were found to have internal control weaknesses in the are of reporting membership data.

Table 11:2 displays the percentages of all the charter schools and the percentage of all the host districts that had findings in each of six categories. It is important to know that there is not a 1-1 correspondence with charters and host districts. One district hosted eight of the audited charter schools, two districts each hosted two charter schools, one school was hosted by two districts, and one school was hosted by three districts. However, in the aggregates in Table 11:2, each charter school was counted once and each host district was counted once. This comparison with recent AG audits of the audited charter schools' host districts[1] shows that the districts received slightly fewer "findings" related to weaknesses or noncompliance. It is important to note that districts are not examined on exactly the same criteria as charter schools since they have different requirements than do charter schools. Each district and charter school is audited in accordance with its own requirements.

Table 11:2 Proportion of Schools/Districts With Findings of Weakness Identified in Audits Conducted by the State Auditor General

Type of School	*Certification Percentage*	*Financial Information*	*Membership Data*	*Instructional Time*	*Nurse/Health Records*	*Board Meeting Records*
Charter Schools ($N = 21$)	52.4%	57.1%	66.7%	14.3%	9.5%	9.5%
Host District Schools ($N = 15$)	53.3%	53.3%	40.0%	0%	0%	0%

Notes: *Certification percentage* concerns the 75 percent certification requirement for charter school professional staff. *Financial information* concerns control measures for handling and reporting funds. Examples include reporting retirement contributions or Social Security/Medicare taxes. *Membership data* concerns controls for documenting and reporting student membership data. *Instructional time* concerns controls for documenting and reporting student instructional time. *Nurse/health records* concerns meeting the standards for maintaining student health records and the employment of a school nurse. *Board meeting records* concerns the proper scheduling of board meetings and the maintenance of board minutes and attendance records.

The Pennsylvania Auditor General is but one body that is responsible for oversight of charter schools. We now look at the agencies that have primary responsibility for holding the charter schools accountable: the PDE and the local districts.

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[1] Host district audits covered school years ranging from 1993-94 through 2000-01.

11.5 Roles and Responsibilities of PDE

The Office of Education Initiatives at the Pennsylvania Department of Education has played a crucial role in the implementation and expansion of the charter school reform. This office provided technical assistance to charter schools and has conducted compliance visits to charter schools.

Relative to other states, the PDE Office of Education Initiatives has done a remarkable job of providing targeted technical assistance and support for new charter schools. It has used both carrots and sticks to ensure that new charter schools apply for all available resources (both federal and state). All divisions and units at PDE have been responsive to questions and requests for assistance from charter schools. The technical assistance provided by PDE and the resource centers found at each end of the state have helped make charter schools aware of relevant laws and regulations and better prepared to complete and submit the litany of reports and forms required for all public schools.

PDE plays an important indirect oversight role by collecting and presenting general data on all public schools in the state. Each year, PDE produces detailed school profiles that are available on the web for parents to access, regarding each public school in the Commonwealth, including charter schools. These reports contain performance and other data, and allow parents to compare their local district run schools with charters and allow host districts to have a look at data concerning charter schools they host. PDE has also contracted with Standard & Poors to prepare even more detailed reports about each public school in the Commonwealth. These are also available from the Web.

In addition to the requests for information and data that all public schools receive, PDE also requests annual reports from each charter school which are due in August. In terms of oversight or compliance visits, PDE has been responsible only for compliance visits related to the federal funds that charter schools receive. These visits have typically involved question and answer periods with the CAOs and no review of documentation and evidence to support responses. In recent years, as the number of schools has increased and as the Office of Education Initiatives has taken on more responsibilities for other reforms or initiatives, the frequency of site visits has decreased considerably.

11.6 Roles and Responsibilities of Local Districts That Grant Charters

Local districts or LEAs that grant the charter are the primary oversight agency. LEAs decide which applications to approve (although appeals can be made to the Charter School Appeal Board to overturn LEA decisions). LEAs also make decisions about renewal or nonrenwal when the contract runs out. Finally, LEAs have the right to revoke a charter when a school is not living up to its contract or when it is found to be violating serious rules or regulations regarding the governance or operation of the school. Given that LEAs have primary responsibility for ensuring that these goals are met, a related question is how well LEAs discharge their oversight responsibilities.

From interviews with representatives from chartering LEAs and charter school administrators, we learned that the LEAs vary considerably in their understanding of oversight responsibilities. Some LEAs have requested completion of specific forms and reports for the district, while others make no formal requests for information from the charter schools. A few districts have conducted what we might consider a compliance visit, while others only visit for ceremonial purposes. In Philadelphia and in many other parts of the Commonwealth, most charter schools report that they receive no visits at all from representatives of the host school districts. We did find that local districts engaged in oversight activities just before charter contracts came up for renewal.

One possible reason for the limited oversight by LEAs is that it can be costly both in human and financial resources. A few districts cited this as a reason for not visiting the schools more often. Another partial explanation is the uncertainty on the part of the LEAs regarding their actual right or responsibility to conduct compliance visits.

The School District of Philadelphia–having done little charter school oversight–planned to conduct extensive site visits at schools that were coming up for renewal in 2000. At that time, however, the charter schools and PDE representatives protested, claiming that such visits would be redundant and disruptive. Instead, it was suggested that the district could receive the information obtained from PDE site visits. Even after a formal request, however, this information was never shared with district officials. In September 2002, Philadelphia announced a new plan for "intensive evaluation" of several district schools–including 14 charter schools facing renewal. This will include site visits and examination of academic achievement, school safety, and financial stability.

Revocation or nonrenewal of a charter is the strongest action that can be taken by LEAs. Thus far, only two charter schools have been closed in Pennsylvania, which represents a much lower proportion of closures than found in other states. This would suggest that charter schools are doing an extremely good job, or it could imply that LEAs are lax in providing oversight.

The relationship between the charter school and its host district should also be taken into consideration. As chapter 9 details, these relationships range from cooperative to indifferent to hostile. This undoubtedly affects the LEA's amount and quality of communication with the charter schools and their willingness to provide timely, beneficial oversight.

11.7 Conclusion and Summary

This chapter addressed the various components of a charter school's accountability plan, discussed accountability as it relates to a charter school's mission, and addressed how well charter schools are clearly delineating their separate goals and objectives. It also described the oversight provided by PDE, LEAs, and the Auditor General.

Charter schools can be viewed in terms of performance accountability, regulatory accountability, and market accountability. Each of these three areas affects the others. A charter school's performance accountability should affect its market accountability because parents will be less likely to send their children to a school that is not achieving its goals. Performance accountability will influence regulatory accountability because a chartering agency will be less likely to extend the charter of a nonperforming school.

A charter school's annual report to PDE and its host district is one of the seven primary components of a charter school's accountability plan. For a charter school to be fairly and accurately evaluated, its annual report must show clear goals that are related to its mission, measurable, and assessed with appropriate evidence. Our analysis found that charter school goals (as reported to PDE in annual reports) have improved from 2001 to 2002 as far as clarity, scope, and measurability. However, as a whole they still did not provide enough information to determine whether or not they were meeting outcome-oriented objectives. Adequately developing, assessing, and reporting goals for a charter school takes time, effort, and practice. The revised form for reporting goals and attainment of them appeared to facilitate these improvements. More consistent use of the new format among all the charter schools may improve the overall quality of the annual reports. Most importantly, the status of attaining outcome-oriented goals must be relevant and clearly stated.

PDE should continue to improve and streamline its annual report format. Moreover, it would be wise to continue searching for other ways to improve the format including, but not limited to, clarifying definitions of key concepts and ensuring 100 percent response rates to all questions. Ideally, these reports should be posted on the Web so they would be more easily accessible to LEAs, parents, and other interested groups.

Since 1997, the Pennsylvania Auditor General (AG) has produced audits of 21 charter schools. A number of charter schools had deficient findings as far as percentage of certified staff, reporting of financial inputs and expenditures, and student membership records. However, the host districts also had substantial findings in each of these areas. A few charter schools also had findings regarding inadequate instructional time, the employment of school nurses, or board meeting records–issues that are more challenging to charter schools than to host districts.

We had far less data regarding the findings of the LEAs and the PDE. There have been some difficulties with the oversight from these parties. First, there is an unclear division of labor when it comes to overseeing the charter schools. Timing is another issue that hampers the effectiveness of oversight from both the LEAs and PDE. Generally, the charter schools are not thoroughly assessed and given feedback until just before decisions about their renewal must be made. Earlier feedback could help schools identify and remedy their shortcomings. This could help charter schools become more successful in the long run.

Policymakers should consider undertaking a systematic assessment of LEAs' capacity (both human and fiscal) to provide meaningful, timely, and consistent oversight of the charter schools they sponsor. PDE might then be able to provide technical assistance targeted to areas of greatest need. Similarly, policymakers should consider a review of the current division of labor between PDE and LEA on issues of oversight. This might provide an opportunity to clarify roles and to direct resources to areas of highest need. Act 22 is clear that LEA overseers are an important partner in assuring quality in charter schools and should be an integral part of attempts to improve charter school quality and accountability.

The findings and issues discussed in this chapter suggest a number of possible approaches for consolidating and building upon improvements in Pennsylvania charter school accountability. There is great potential for further improvements in holding Pennsylvania charter schools more accountable to their regulatory and performance goals. This will provide more data for informed parental choice of schools and thus influence their market accountability as well.

Chapter Twelve
Student Achievement

At the heart of the charter concept lies a "bargain": schools will receive more autonomy in operations in exchange for being held more accountable than other public schools for student outcomes. Much of this report has examined what Pennsylvania charter schools are doing with their enhanced autonomy in the areas of teacher professional development, organization, governance, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In this chapter we attempt to determine whether charter schools have lived up to their end of the bargain by producing improved student outcomes. Specifically, we address the following evaluation questions:

- ☐ Does increased flexibility in exchange for increased accountability result in improved pupil results?
- ☐ Is there evidence that, over the term of the charter, student learning has significantly improved?

The key finding of this chapter is that Pennsylvania charter schools appear to be having a modestly positive influence on student achievement. Yet, a simple examination of scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) suggests that most charter schools score well below the state average. In this section we endeavor to explain how both statements can be true. The answer lies in the distinction between score levels and score gains or value added. *In short, Pennsylvania charter schools appear to be attracting students with lower-than-average achievement levels and producing small relative gains (15 points per year, on average) in their achievement levels.*[1] Thus, before presenting the findings, we briefly discuss how we estimated value added and why simply examining PSSA levels is insufficient for evaluating charter school effectiveness. The discussion of methods in this chapter has been kept brief and relatively nontechnical. Readers interested in a more detailed exposition of methods are referred to Appendix F. This appendix also includes school-by-school results on student achievement.

It is important to note at the outset that the findings presented in this chapter are suggestive, but not conclusive. The relative newness of many of the Commonwealth's charter schools, along with the properties of the achievement data, place important limitations on any attempt to assess the schools' effectiveness in leveraging improvements in student achievement. These limitations notwithstanding, we believe that the analyses presented in this chapter are as strong as is possible given these constraints. These limitations are discussed in Appendix F.

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[1] It is important to note that these findings are different from a recent analysis of charter school PSSA scores by the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. The other study, while employing a somewhat similar data analytic technique, is wholly cross-sectional in nature and does not take into score gains over time. Moreover, the Tribune-Review study includes a smaller set of demographic control variables.

12.1. Assessing Charter School Effectiveness

Historically, Pennsylvania charter schools have scored much lower on the PSSA than noncharter schools. Over the 5 years of the initiative (1997-98 to 2001-02) the typical charter school posted a PSSA scaled score of 1160.[2] Given that the state average typically hovers around 1300, it is clear that students in charter schools post PSSA scores that are considerably lower than their peers in typical noncharter public schools. As is often the case, this average masks considerable school-to-school variation. Indeed, 8 out of the 63 (13 percent) schools reporting PSSA scores during the period 1997-98 to 2001-02 posted average scores over 1300.

What PSSA Levels Can and Cannot Tell Us

Knowing charter schools' achievement levels, however, tells us very little about their value as levers for improvement in student achievement. It is well known that student achievement scores reflect, in large measure, the "background" characteristics that students bring to the school. These include family income, race,[3] special education status, urbanicity, and so on. In analyses conducted for this evaluation, these background factors typically accounted for roughly three-fourths of the school-to-school variation in PSSA levels.

By themselves, then, unadjusted achievement scores are more a measure of student characteristics than of school effectiveness. Indeed, as Chapter 10 documents, the typical Pennsylvania charter school enrolls higher concentrations of disadvantaged students than other public schools. The challenge, therefore, is to determine what part of PSSA achievement scores reflect charter school effects, as opposed to the characteristics of the students who happen to enroll in them. In short, the question is how much educational value do charter schools add to their students?

Estimating Value Added

The most straightforward way to assess value added is to observe achievement growth in individual students. Since achievement gains are much less correlated with student background factors than student achievement levels, they provide a good indicator of school effectiveness. The PSSA system, however, was not designed to track individual students over time. Currently, students are assessed at three grade levels only (5, 8, and 11).[4] Thus, instead of observing a single group of students (e.g., fifth graders) as they progress into the sixth grade and beyond, we are restricted to observing the performance of consecutive groups of students. By themselves, then, trends in PSSA performance do not allow us to distinguish score changes that are due to school effectiveness from those that are due to changes in student composition.

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[2] This figure incorporates scores from all grade levels and subject areas across all five years of the initiative.

[3] In analyses conducted for this evaluation, race was found to be associated with achievement levels even after we controlled for income. For instance, the partial correlation between 5th grade math scores for 2001-02 and racial composition was -0.32 ($p < 0.01$), net of income.

To estimate the charter school effect, we developed a set of statistical "filters" that subtract most of the changes in student composition over time in the charter schools (Nelson & Applegate, 2002). The remaining portion of the score changes provides a reasonable (though not foolproof) estimate of school effectiveness. While calculating the filtered scores requires advanced statistical techniques (described in Appendix F), the basic idea is relatively simple. The filters work by comparing each charter school with a set of demographically and geographically similar noncharter public schools. Instead of focusing on absolute levels of PSSA scores, the filtered scores focus on the *differences* between each charter school and a specially selected comparison group of similar schools. Variables used in the filters include: income, race, special education status, urbanicity, PSSA participation rates, and school enrollment.

Inasmuch as the comparison schools are similar to charter schools in most relevant respects save for not being a charter school, the filtered (difference) scores provide a good approximation of the charter effect. We emphasize that the filtered scores are no substitute for observing individual student gains over time. However, they appear to provide the best possible approximation given the available data.

Another advantage of the filtered scores is that they have a straightforward interpretation. Since the filtered scores represent the difference between a charter school and its specially selected comparison group, a score of zero indicates that the charter school is performing exactly on par with its comparison group. Unlike most test metrics, filtered scores can take negative values, which indicate that the charter school's performance is below that of its comparison group. For instance, a filtered score of -50 indicates that the average student in a charter school scored 50 points lower on the PSSA than the average student in the school's comparison group. By contrast, a filtered score of 78 indicates that the average student in a charter school scored 78 points higher than the average student in the school's comparison group.

As discussed above, changes in scores over time provide a better estimate of value added than a snapshot from a single point in time. Charter school gains in filtered scores indicate that the average student score is catching up with the average student in the school's comparison group. Similarly, declines in a charter school's filtered scores suggests that the average student in the charter school is falling behind the average student in the school's comparison group.

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[4] The Commonwealth has also assessed sixth and ninth graders in writing. However, School Profiles data files contained no writing data were available for the 1999-00, 2000-01, and 2001-02 academic years.

Readers are reminded, however, that the PSSA system does not allow us to track individual students (or even cohorts of students) over time. Thus, gains and losses in filtered scores represent comparisons between fifth, eighth, and eleventh graders in one year with different groups of fifth, eighth, and eleventh graders in subsequent years. The filtering methodology allows us to subtract that part of the score changes that are due to measurable changes in student demographics as we move from one group of students to the next.

12.2. Key Findings

Using the filtered scores, the picture is brighter for charter schools than with the unfiltered PSSA scores. Before discussing changes in filtered scores over time, it is instructive to note that, averaged over time (and across grade levels and subject areas), the typical Pennsylvania charter school student scored just slightly lower (36 points) than the average student in his or her comparison group. Given that the PSSA scale ranges from approximately 1000 to 1600, a 36-point average deficit is a small one (5 percent of the scale range). In practical terms, whereas the average Pennsylvania charter school student scored some 140 points below the state average over the life of the initiative, he or she scored only slightly lower than the average student in demographically and geographically similar noncharter public schools.

Turning to changes in filtered scores over time, we found that 24 of the 42 schools (57 percent) with at least 2 years of PSSA data showed positive trends in filtered scores. Averaged over all of these 42 schools, there was typically a 15

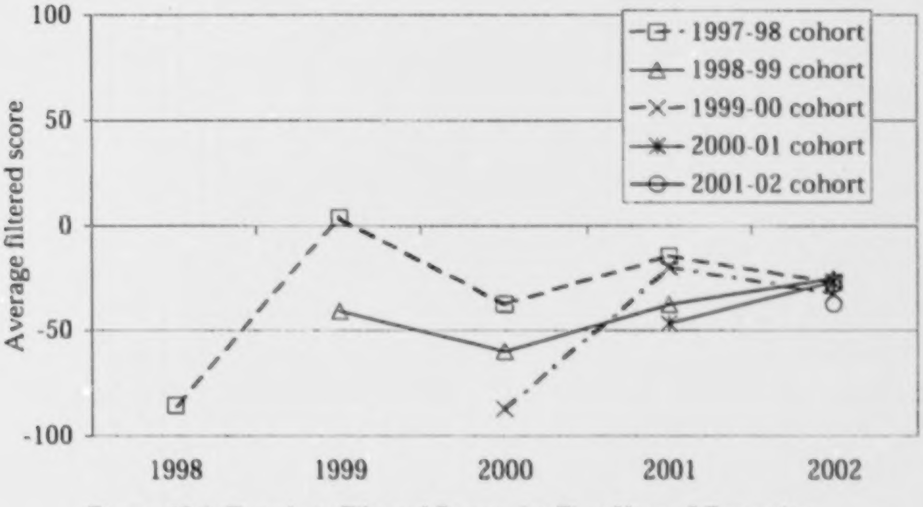

Figure 12:1 Trends in Filtered Scores, by First Year of Operation

Note: A filtered score of zero indicates that the average charter school student scored exactly on par with the average student in demographically and geographically similar noncharter public schools. Positive (negative) filtered scores indicate that the average charter school student scored above (below) the average student in the comparison schools.

point gain (p = 0.02)[5] in PSSA scores, after we filter out changes in student characteristics. Trends in filtered scores are illustrated in Figure 12:1, which shows growth in average filtered scores for schools opened during the fall of 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Figure 12:2 provides a useful supplement to Figure 12:1. Here we plot scaled scores for both charter and comparison schools. Figure 12:2 confirms the finding that the gap between charter and comparison schools is generally narrowing over time.

To give practical meaning to these positive trends, we estimated how long it would take each charter school to "catch up" to its comparison schools. Focusing only on the 14 charter schools that lagged behind their comparison group (and for which we had trend data), we estimate that *the typical charter school is likely to catch up to its comparison group in 2 to 3 years* . However, there was considerable variation among charter schools. At 1 school, for instance, past growth rates suggest that it will catch up to its comparison group within a year. At another, this process would take another 44 years. These predictions, of course, are based on the assumption that future trends will be similar to past growth trends. Figure 12:3 illustrates variations in average annual gains across charter schools.

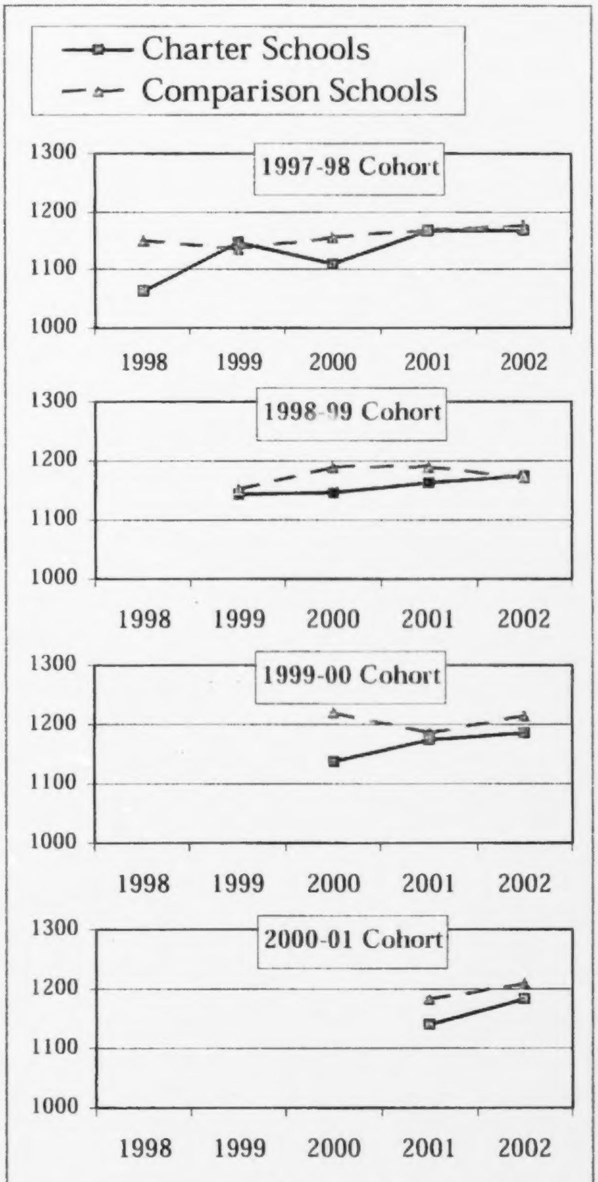

Figure 12:2 Gains on PSSA Scaled Score for Charter Schools and Comparison Groups by Cohort

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[5] The null hypothesis that generated the p-value was that the average annual gain was zero.

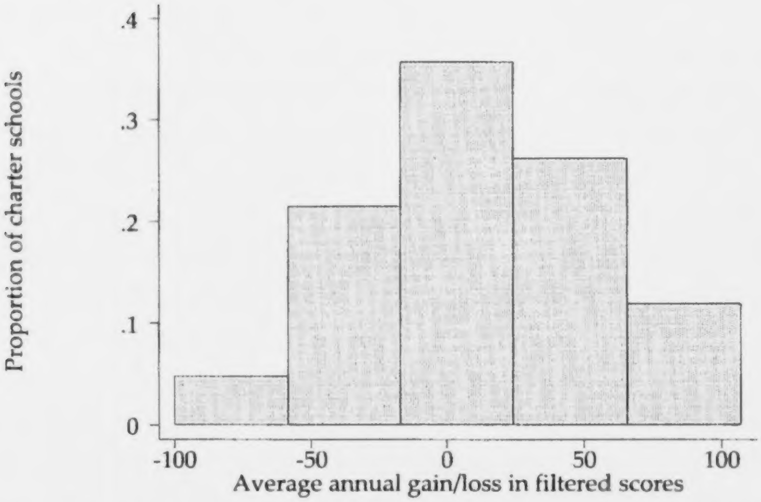

Figure 12:3 Variation in Annual Growth Rates Across Charter Schools

Table 12:1 further explores variation across charter schools by showing average growth rates in filtered scores broken out according to subject area, grade level, and first year of operation. Growth rates in filtered scores are higher for reading than for mathematics, with the typical charter school gaining 17.5 points per year in reading, compared with 11.5 points in math. Once again, these differences are small, given that there is more than a 600 point range in the PSSA scale.

Table 12:1 Growth Rates in Filtered PSSA Scores

Category	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*Number of Trends*
Subject Area			
Math	11.5	41.7	42
Reading	17.5	47.0	42
Grade Level			
5th	17.0	35.2	25
8th	8.0	43.1	24
11th	11.5	80.3	15
Year Opened			
1997	19.6	30.5	4
1998	11.2	51.7	22
1999	16.4	19.4	11
2000	19.4	38.3	5
All Trends	15.2	39.5	42

There were also differences according to grade level, with filtered score gains the highest for fifth graders (17 points), followed by eleventh graders (11.5 points) and eighth graders (8 points). Once again, these differences are small and fail to reach statistical significance. The failure to find differences by grade levels is somewhat surprising given that high school students often present schools with a broader set of educational challenges. However, the small differences probably reflect the filtering process, which subtracts much of the influence of student background factors.

Similarly, we found only small differences in growth rates by first year of operation. Still, readers should bear in mind that there is less evidence upon which to base growth rates for the newer schools. Future analyses should continue to examine differences among cohorts of charter schools to see whether new schools are able to build upon the success or failures of schools that opened before them.

12.3. Summary and Conclusions

This chapter sought to assess the impact of charter school attendance on student achievement, as measured by the PSSA. The chapter's key finding is that PSSA scores in the typical Pennsylvania charter school are gaining ground against students in demographically and geographically similar noncharter public schools. The magnitude of these annual gains is small–typically 15 points per year. However, even this small rate of growth–if it persists–implies that most charter schools that currently score lower than their comparison group will catch up within approximately 3 years. These predictions, of course, are based on the debatable assumption that future trends will be similar to past growth trends. Any and all predictions, moreover, are limited by the fact that most of the Commonwealth's charter schools have been in operation for just a few years.

To return to the evaluation questions that framed this chapter, it appears that for the typical charter school, achievement levels have improved over time. Inasmuch as the score gains presented in this chapter are normed against schools that are similar in most important respects save for charter status, there is at least some evidence that the gains are associated with charter status.

Like all previous studies of achievement in charter schools, our analysis is subject to some important limitations. The most important of these is that the PSSA is not well suited to tracking student gains over time. Indeed, instead of tracking a single cohort of students over time, analysts are restricted to comparing this year's fifth, eighth, or eleventh graders with different groups of fifth, eighth, and eleventh graders in subsequent years. Thus, evaluators must find some way to distinguish score changes that reflect school effectiveness from those that reflect year-to-year changes in student composition. To this end, we have developed a statistical "filtering" methodology that subtracts the influence of student background factors. While not foolproof, this method represents a substantial improvement over examination of unadjusted PSSA scores.

Another important limitation of these findings is that, short of a randomized experiment, one cannot be absolutely sure that the charter-noncharter differences have been caused by the charter school law. To be sure, the system of demographic and geographic controls used to derive the filtered scores rules out a large number of rival explanations for the differences. However, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that the charter-noncharter differences are due to unmeasurable differences in parental motivation, social capital, and other intangible factors. Once again, our methods, while not foolproof, represent a considerable improvement from the examination of unadjusted test scores.[6]

Even stronger analyses of the charter school achievement impact will be possible should the Commonwealth move to a system that facilitates the tracking of individual achievement gains over time. Also, the passage of more time will provide longer series of data against which to estimate more certain growth trends. In the meantime, policymakers must evaluate the initiative's effectiveness with the data at hand. The findings in this chapter are designed to provide sound data to inform–though not fully justify–decisions about the Commonwealth's charter school initiative. Although the purpose of this evaluation is not to evaluate individual charter schools, Appendix F does presents school-level PSSA results that can inform parents about individual schools.

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[6] Indeed, a rival explanation for the observed gains in filtered scores is that charter schools have, over time, gotten better at attracting students and families with behavioral and attitudinal characteristics better matched to school mission, curriculum, and pedagogy. These characteristics are probably not well captured by variations in demographic variables.

Chapter Thirteen
Alternative Indicators of Charter School Quality

In the previous chapter we assessed Pennsylvania charter schools' success in leveraging improvements in student achievement. While student achievement is certainly the most oft-cited measure of charter school quality, it is far from the only relevant criterion on which the schools might be evaluated. As a choice-based reform, many view charter schools as responsible for satisfying their "customers'" preferences. According to the theory of market accountability, consumers are the most important judges of quality. Thus, if a charter school's customers are satisfied, the school should be regarded as a success.

While there is considerable debate about how much relative weight achievement and satisfaction should be given in evaluating charter schools (see, e.g., Miron & Nelson, 2002), most charter school laws (including Act 22) contemplate a place for both market and performance accountability. This chapter supplements Chapter 12's analysis of achievement data with an examination of various indicators of customer satisfaction, including waiting lists and responses to surveys of charter school students, parents, and teachers.[1]

Data on waiting lists were obtained from annual reports submitted by each charter school to PDE's Office of Educational Initiatives. Attendance data were provided through PDE's School Profiles Database. Details on the student, parent, and teacher surveys may be found in Chapter 2.

13.1 Waiting Lists

Waiting lists provide an important source of information about the extent to which educational consumers value charter schools. While surveys might provide a window to individual attitudes about the schools, waiting lists provide an indication of the extent to which they are willing to "vote with their feet" for the schools.

An item on PDE's charter school annual report asks the schools to indicate how many students are on their waiting lists at a given point in time. For the 2001-02 academic year 63 of 77 (82 percent) provided information on waiting lists.

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[1] We also sought to include data on attendance rates. However, low response rates by charter schools in PDE data files made any comparisons between charter and noncharter public schools tenuous.

Of those reporting, the median waiting list comprised approximately 28 percent of current enrollment. There was considerable variation across charter schools, with some reporting no students on their waiting lists and others with waiting lists comprising nearly 400 percent of current enrollment.[2] Table 13:1 illustrates the range in size of the self-reported waiting lists as a proportion of current enrollment.

While waiting lists suggest a market demand, we earlier reported on indicators that students were also leaving the schools. For example, the self reported turnover rate in schools ranged from 0 to 40 during any given year. According to official data on student stability in charter school, just over 10 percent of the charter school students entered after the start of the school year and 13.5 percent of the charter school students were withdrawing during the school year.

Table 13:1 Charter School Waiting Lists as a Percentage of Current Enrollment, 2001-02

Waiting list as % of current enrollment	*Number of charter schools*
0% to 50%	39
51% to 100%	8
101% to 150%	7
151% to 200%	6
201% to 250%	0
251% to 300%	1
301% to 350%	1
Greater than 350%	1
Total	63

Source: Self-Reported figures from the Charter School Annual Reports, 2001-02

13.2 Perceived Achievement Gains

One important aspect of customer satisfaction with charter schools is perceived academic gains. Presumably, parents would think twice about continuing to send their children to a charter school if they did not believe —test scores notwithstanding—that their performance was improving. Measures of perceived performance are an important supplement to evidence from standardized tests because the latter might miss aspects of academic improvement not captured by such tests.

One question on the student surveys asked students to rate their performance at their previous school as either excellent, good, average, poor, or unsatisfactory. Another question immediately following the first asked students to rate their current (charter school) performance on the same scale. Table 13:2 summarizes the student self-ratings. The table reveals only small differences in perceived performance from previous to current school. While the percentage of students rating themselves as "Excellent" dropped slightly from 29 percent to 25 percent, the percentage rating themselves as "Good" grew from 39 percent to 45 percent. The percentages of students rating themselves as "Average," "Poor," or "Unsatisfactory" remained relatively stable.

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[2] The distribution of waiting lists was skewed rightward, with a few schools having very long waiting lists. The fact that the mean value was more than twice as large (65 percent) as the median value (28 percent) illustrates the degree of skewness.

Table 13:2 Student Self-Rated Academic Performance at Previous and Current School

Self-Rating	*Previous School*	*Current School*
Excellent	29	25
Good	39	45
Average	23	24
Poor	7	5
Unsatisfactory	2	1

Wilcoxon signed rank test, $p < 0.79$

The surveys also asked parents to report their perceptions of their children's academic progress. Seventy-three percent of parents surveyed said that the statement "My child's achievement level is improving" was true. Another 21 percent said that the statement was partly true, while 6 percent said that the statement was false (see Table 13:3).

Table 13:3 Parents' Perceptions of Student Achievement Gains

Response	*Current Experience*
True	73
Partly True	21
False	6

Source: Evaluation Center Survey

Parents at charter schools, in short, appear to believe that student achievement is improving. However, it is less clear that this perception is shared by the students themselves.

13.3 Satisfaction With Accomplishment of School Missions

As discussed in Chapter 11, school mission statements are central to charter school accountability. In addition to results on standardized tests, charter schools are, in theory, held accountable for the goals set out in their charters and accompanying documents. Accordingly, we asked charter school parents and teachers to judge how well their school had accomplished its own particular mission.

Before asking about the accomplishment of mission goals, however, we sought to determine whether parents and teachers were aware of their school's mission. Some 90 percent of parents and 98 percent of teachers reported that they were aware of their school's mission. While this certainly suggests wide knowledge of, and perhaps support for, charter school missions, it is unclear from the survey instruments just how deep this familiarity and support run. Students appear to be less aware of school missions, with only 56 percent reporting that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am aware of the mission of my school."

Having established whether respondents were aware of their school's mission, we asked them whether they thought the school had succeeded so far in fulfilling that mission. Approximately equal proportions of parents and teachers said that their school's mission was being followed well or very well. Indeed, 83 percent of parents and 73 percent of teachers said that their school's mission was being followed "well" or "very well" by the school. These perceptions are illustrated in Figure 13:1. The fact that teachers are, as a group, less satisfied with mission fulfillment should be interpreted in light of the fact that they are more likely to be knowledgeable about the details of school operations. Thus, it might be argued that their perceptions should be given more weight than those of parents.

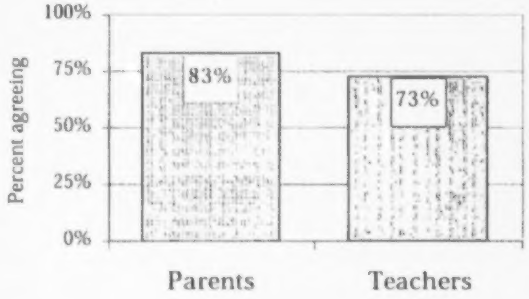

Figure 13:1 Percent of Teachers and Parents Agreeing that School Mission is Being Followed "Well" or "Very Well"

Source Evaluation Center survey

Parent-teacher differences notwithstanding, it is clear that nearly all parents and teachers and approximately half of students report being aware of their school's mission. Of these, most parents and teachers reported being satisfied with the extent to which that mission is being accomplished.

13.4 Satisfaction with Curriculum and Instruction

Our survey research indicates that quality of curriculum and instruction is a very important factor driving parents' decisions to enroll their children in a charter school. Indeed, when asked how important "good teachers and high quality of instruction" were in deciding to enroll their child in a charter school,88 percent responded that it was "important" or "very important." Given the importance of curriculum and instruction to charter school parents, we sought to assess students', teachers', and parents' levels of satisfaction with these aspects of the schools. We begin with students' perceptions, moving next to the perceptions of parents and teachers.

Students

Our student surveys included a number of items related to satisfaction with instruction. In order to facilitate exposition, we generated an index of closely related items.[3] Items in the index include questions on the availability of teachers, the extent to which teachers encourage students to think about their future, and so on. Table 13:1 includes a complete list of questions included in the index. All items in the index were on a 5-point scale. The index, in turn, is simply an average of all of those items. The average value on the student satisfaction index was 3.9 on a 5-point scale, indicating a moderate-to-high level of satisfaction.

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[3] All indices presented in this chapter were developed using exploratory factor analysis.

Table 13:4 Items Included in Index of Student Satisfaction with Teachers and Instruction

Item	Average Score (SD)
My teachers encourage me to think about my future	3.9 (1.4)
Almost every assignment that I turn in to the teacher is returned with corrections and suggestions	3.6 (1.4)
Teachers and administrators know me by name	4.2 (1.2)
My teacher is available to talk about academic matters	4.0 (1.2)
Index	3.9 (0.9)

Cronbach's alpha = 0.6

As with many characteristics of charter schools, there is considerable school-to-school variation in scores on the satisfaction index. In some schools, the average index value was as low as 2.8 on a 5-point scale, indicating only a middling level of satisfaction. In other schools, the score was as high as 4.5. For the most part, however, student satisfaction with instruction appears to be reasonably high. However, the absence of a comparison group of noncharter schools makes it difficult to interpret these findings.

Parents

We devised a similar index of parents' satisfaction with charter school curriculum and instruction. The index included items on teaching, the curriculum, staff accountability, and expectations for student performance. The specific items are listed in Table 13:5. All of the items in the index were on a 5-point scale. The index is simply an average of all of those items. The average value on the parent satisfaction index was 4.2 on a 5-point scale, indicating a reasonably high level of satisfaction. Readers might notice that the average value on the parent index for satisfaction with curriculum and instruction is slightly higher than the average

Table 13:5 Index of Parents' Satisfaction With Curriculum and Instruction

Item	Average Score (SD)
This school is meeting students' needs that could not be addressed at other local schools	4.0 (1.2)
I am satisfied with the school's curriculum	4.2 (1.1)
I am satisfied with the instruction offered	4.2 (1.1)
I think the school has a bright future	4.4 (1.0)
This school has high standards and expectations for students	4.3 (1.0)
Teachers and school leadership are accountable for student achievement/performance	4.0 (1.2)
Index	4.2 (0.9)

Cronbach's alpha = 0.89

value on the student index for teaching and instruction. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the two indices cannot be compared in any rigorous fashion, since they are based on different items.

As with the student index, there is considerable variation across schools in the values represented by the parent index. In some schools the average value was as high as 4.7 and in others as low as 2.3.

Teachers

As with parents, we devised an index of teachers' satisfaction with curriculum and instruction. The index included items on teaching, the curriculum, staff accountability, and expectations for student performance. The specific items are listed in Table 13:6. All of the items in the index were rated on a 5-point scale. The index, in turn, is simply an average of all of those items. The average value on the teacher satisfaction index was 3.9 on a 5-point scale, indicating a fairly high level of satisfaction.

Table 13:6 Index of Teachers' Satisfaction With Curriculum and Instruction

Item	Average Score (SD)
This school has high standards and expectations for students	4.0 (1.0)
I think this school has a bright future	4.1 (1.0)
Teachers are challenged to be effective	4.0 (1.0)
I am satisfied with the school mission statement	4.0 (1.0)
I am satisfied with the school's ability to fulfill its stated mission	3.6 (1.1)
Teachers and school leaders are accountable for student achievement/performance	4.0 (0.9)
This school is meeting students' needs that could not be addressed at other local schools	3.8 (1.1)
Parents are satisfied with the instruction	3.8 (0.9)
I am satisfied with the school's curriculum	3.6 (1.1)
Index	3.9 (0.8)

Cronbach's alpha = 0.89

As with the student and parent indices, there is considerable variation in the average value across charter schools. In some schools the average value was as high as 4.7 and in others as low as 2.5. This variation is illustrated graphically in Figure 13:2.

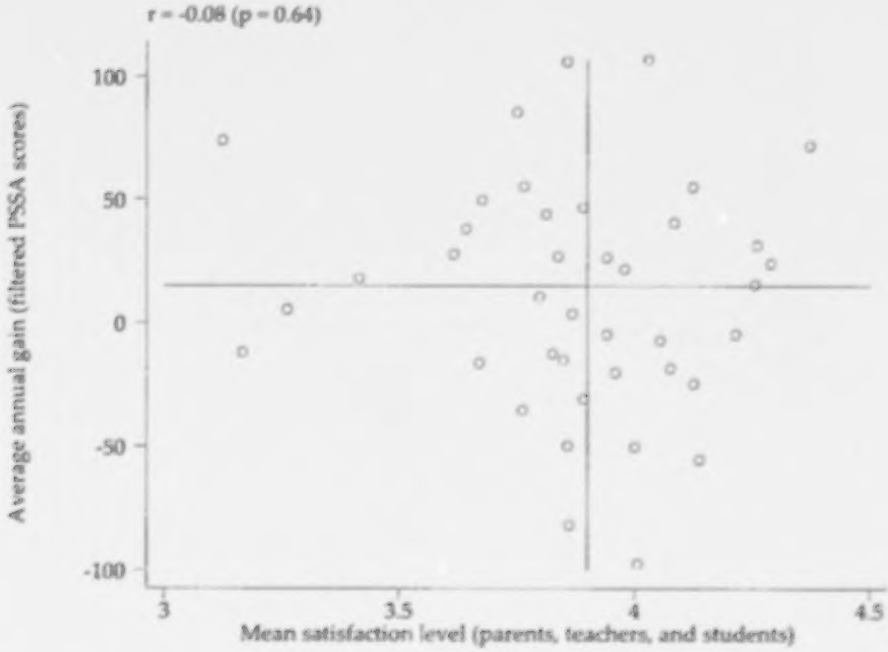

Figure 13:2 Academic Performance and Customer Satisfaction Compared for 40 Charter Schools

Source: Analysis by The Evaluation Center based on survey data and PSSA results

In summary, satisfaction with curriculum, teachers, and instruction appears to be quite high among teachers, parents, and students responding to surveys.

13.5 Satisfaction With Resources

A final dimension we examine in this chapter is satisfaction with facilities and resources. Facilities and resources are consistently cited by charter school operators as significant barriers to effective implementation of school missions. As we might expect, parents and teachers appear to be less satisfied with these aspects of their charter schools.

Parents

The surveys of charter school parents included two items designed to address issues of facilities and resources. First, we asked parents whether they agreed with the statement, "This school has sufficient financial resources." Some 56 percent of parents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. A similar percentage (52) of parents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "This school has good physical facilities." Thus, satisfaction with resources and facilities was somewhat lower than satisfaction with mission fulfillment and curriculum and instruction.

Teachers

Our teacher surveys included several items pertaining to satisfaction with facilities and resources, which we combined into an overall index. The index included items on quality of facilities, sufficiency of resources, and access to computers. The specific items are listed in Table 13:7. All of the items in the index were rated on a 5-point scale. The index, in turn, is simply an average of all of those items. The average value on the index of teacher satisfaction with resources was 3.4 on a 5-point scale, indicating a middling level of satisfaction.

Table 13:7 Index of Teachers' Satisfaction With Resources

Item	*Average Score (SD)*
I am satisfied with the availability of computers and other technology	3.7 (1.2)
I am satisfied with school buildings and facilities	3.5 (1.3)
The school has good physical facilities	3.1 (1.3)
I am satisfied with resources available for instruction	3.4 (1.2)
The school has sufficient financial resources	3.2 (1.3)
Index	3.4 (1.0)

Note: Cronbach's alpha = 0.79

Interestingly, there was even more school-to-school variation on the average index scores for the resources index than the other indices. Indeed, 6 schools had mean scores of 2.5 or less, with 1 school posting a mean of 1.6.

In summary, parents and teachers appear to be somewhat less satisfied with resources and facilities at their schools than with curriculum, instruction, mission, and student academic gains.

13.6 The Relationship Between Customer Satisfaction and Academic Performance

As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, there is some debate about how much weight evaluators should give to customer satisfaction versus academic performance in evaluating charter schools (see, e.g., Miron & Nelson, 2002). While this report takes no position on how to weigh these two criterion, we have examined the relationship between the two as evidenced in the Commonwealth's charter schools. Using the filtered PSSA scores discussed in Chapter 12, we compared average annual gains with aggregate levels of parent, teacher, and student satisfaction for the 40 charter schools for which both types of information were available.[4]

As Figure 13:2 shows, there is no discernible relationship between average annual gains and levels of customer satisfaction across the Commonwealth's charter schools. Indeed, the Pearson correlation between the two was -0.08 (p = 0.64). We also sought to assess how well students' self-assessments of academic gain (discussed above) match with achievement gains as measured by the filtered PSSA scores. Here the relationship was weakly positive (r = 0.33) and statistically discernible (p = 0.04), though not particularly strong (see Figure 13:3). This latter finding notwithstanding, it appears that customers' satisfaction with school processes such as curriculum and instruction bears no relationship between academic outcomes. Both analyses suggest that attempts to use customer satisfaction as a proxy for academic performance (and vice versa) are unwarranted (Nelson, 2001).

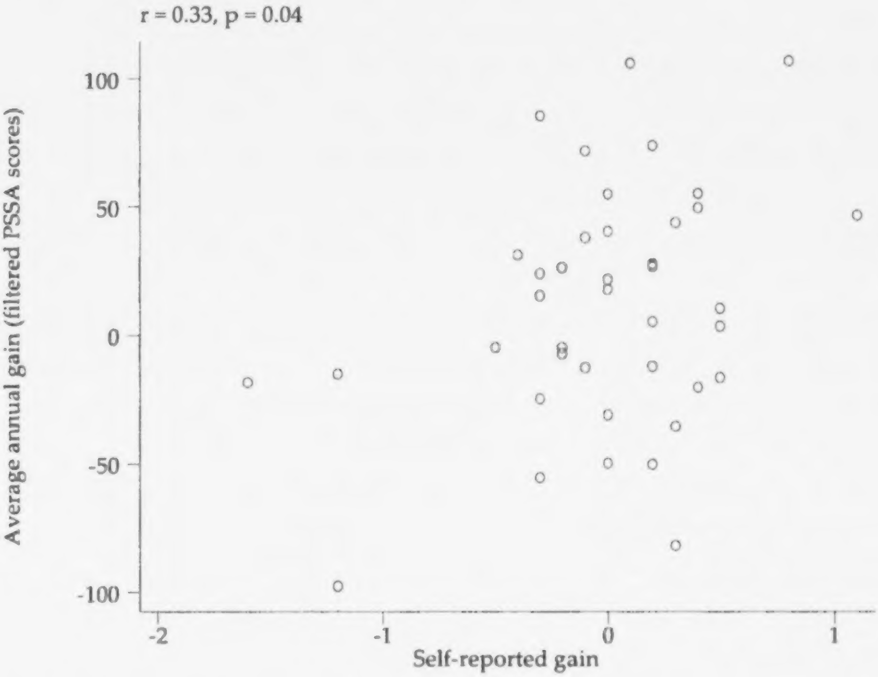

Figure 13:3 PSSA Gains and Self-Reported Gains Compared
Source: Analysis by The Evaluation Center based on survey data and PSSA results

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[4] To simplify the analysis, we focused only on satisfaction with curriculum and instruction. The aggregated satisfaction scores are the unweighted mean of the parent, teacher, and student satisfaction indices discussed earlier in this chapter.

13.7 Summary

While it is clear that the charter concept requires enhanced accountability in charter schools, there is far from universal agreement about the particular outcomes for which the schools should be held accountable. This chapter has supplemented Chapter 12's examination of student achievement with an examination of customer satisfaction.

Generally, charter school parents, students, and teachers appear to be quite satisfied with the curriculum and instruction in their schools. While parents appear to be the most satisfied of all three groups, the differences among respondent groups was minimal. Perhaps not surprisingly, most parents were satisfied that their charter schools' curriculum and instruction was yielding academic benefits, with nearly three-fourths indicating that their child's academic performance was improving as a result of charter school attendance. Similarly, most parents and teachers reported that their school's mission was being adequately fulfilled. Satisfaction levels were lower, by contrast, with respect to school financial resources and facilities. Only one-half of parents, for instance, indicated that they were satisfied with their school's financial resources and facilities. On all satisfaction indicators there was considerable school-to-school variation, with some schools reporting high levels of satisfaction and others low levels.

The satisfaction data, however, are subject to four important limitations. First, comparing charter schools' customer satisfaction with that of noncharter public schools was beyond the scope and budget of the study. Thus, we have no way of knowing whether satisfaction levels in charter schools are higher or lower than satisfaction levels in other schools. Second, there may be a tendency for respondents who chose charter schools to give positive ratings to their schools in large part because they chose the school (i.e., "it must be good if I chose it"). Third, there is no discernible relationship between gains in student performance and levels of customer satisfaction across the Commonwealth's charter schools. Therefore, attempts to use customer satisfaction as a proxy for academic performance (and vice versa) are unwarranted. Finally, many of the charter schools reflected in the foregoing analysis are quite new. Thus, performance on these alternative indicators might well change in the coming years.

The chapter also examined the extent to which families are voting with their feet for charter schools through an examination of the schools' waiting lists. While there was considerable variation among schools, the median charter school's waiting comprised 28 percent of current enrollment during the 2001-02 academic year.

Chapter Fourteen
Key Findings and Policy Issues

Pennsylvania's 1997 charter school law (Act 22) calls for an evaluation of the program after five years. This report, prepared pursuant to a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) fulfills this statutory requirement. In particular, the report sought to identify strengths and weaknesses as they pertain to Act 22's main policy goals, which include those listed below:

- ☐ Improving pupil learning
- ☐ Increasing learning opportunities for all pupils
- ☐ Encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods
- ☐ Creating new professional opportunities for teachers
- ☐ Providing parents and pupils expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system
- ☐ Holding charter schools accountable for meeting measurable academic standards and providing the school with a method to establish accountability systems

Findings in this report are based on data collected by the evaluation team from charter schools and key stakeholder groups in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002. The study also builds on longitudinal data provided to us by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

This final chapter seeks to identify key strengths and weaknesses as identified throughout the report, identify key policy issues that flow from these strengths and weaknesses, and discuss future evaluation activities.

14.1 Student Achievement

Achievement is one of the most widely discussed impacts of charter schools. Before summarizing key findings, it is important to note that the typical practice of assessing school quality using unadjusted PSSA scores is insufficient for assessing charter school effectiveness. It is well known that scores on student achievement tests are highly correlated with background factors such as family income. Thus, examination of unadjusted PSSA scores tells us more about the types of students choosing to attend charter schools than about the schools' effectiveness in leveraging achievement gains. To estimate the charter school effect, we developed a set of statistical "filters" that subtract most of the changes in student background in the charter schools (Nelson & Applegate, 2002). Thus, they provide a reasonable (though not foolproof) estimate of charter schools' impact on student achievement (see Appendix F for further details).

Key Findings

Student achievement appears to be a source of modest strength for the Commonwealth's charter school initiative (see Chapter 12). Charter school students usually score considerably lower than the typical Pennsylvania public school and just slightly lower than demographically and geographically similar public schools. However, focusing on the filtered scores described above suggests that PSSA scores in the typical Pennsylvania charter school have gained ground against demographically and geographically similar noncharter public schools. The magnitude of these annual gains is small —typically 15 points per year. However, even this small rate of growth—if it persists—implies that most charter schools that currently score lower than demographically similar schools will catch up within approximately 3 years. Of course, these predictions are limited by the fact that most of the Commonwealth's charter schools have been in operation for just a few years. Moreover, the nature of the data leaves us unable to say with complete certainty that the gains were caused by charter status. Nonetheless, these findings are reason for cautious optimism.

Unfortunately, the achievement findings are not uniformly positive in the Commonwealth's charter schools. While some schools posted very strong gains, others reported steep losses. Thus, whether the Commonwealth's charter schools are effective in leveraging achievement gains depends very much on the particular charter school in question. This inconsistency in performance, while certainly echoed in the Commonwealth's noncharter public schools, is a source of concern about the reform.

Policy Issues and Options

Given the variability in charter school academic performance, policymakers and stakeholders should consider ways to build upon and expand the gains of the more effective charter schools while improving the less effective ones. One method for developing a road map for charter school improvement would be to examine correlates of success in the Commonwealth's charter schools. By identifying any common features of academically effective (and ineffective) schools, such an exercise could identify potential levers for improvement. Should it turn out that charter schools using certain types of educational and administrative approaches systematically outperform others, the Commonwealth might find ways to diffuse these best practices to a greater share of the schools and otherwise make policy "investments" in charter school models that are more likely to succeed. More generally, an assessment of the correlates of success would respond to Gill, Timpane, Ross, and Brewer's (2001) recent and persuasive call to examine what lies in the charter school "black box." Another set of options for addressing inconsistent academic performance revolves around charter school accountability (see section 14.6 and chapters 11).

14.2 Choice and Innovation

As a reform that is at least partially based on the market model, the charter concept relies in part on market competition and market accountability to generate desired educational outcomes. At the very least, market competition requires a variety of options to satisfy customers "tastes" in education Accordingly, one goal of Pennsylvania's charter school initiative is to facilitate choice within the public school system. Choice may be viewed in terms of (a) the number and location of charter school options and (b) the types of educational programs offered by the schools in these locations. This report sought to assess both the availability of charter school options across the Commonwealth and the types of programs they offer.

Key Findings

Unlike some charter school laws, Act 22 places no restrictions on the total number of charter schools in the Commonwealth. Instead, the number is determined by (a) founders' willingness to propose new charters, (b) districts' willingness to approve charters and, in some cases, (c) the Charter Appeals Board's willingness to overturn districts' denials of charter applications.

As documented in Chapter 3, there has been considerable growth in the number of charter schools across the Commonwealth. As of the 2002-03 academic year, 90 charter schools have been created under Pennsylvania's charter school law. This is up from the 77 charter schools that started the 2001-02 year and up considerably from the 6 that were started in 1997-98, the law's first full year of implementation. Charter school enrollment during the 2001-02 academic year was 28,576, up from just under 20,000 the previous year and from 1,143 in 1997-98.

In spite of this growth, many portions of the Commonwealth remain untouched by the charter school initiative. Only 18 of the Commonwealth's 67 counties (27 percent) have charter schools. Charter school enrollment in 10 of these 18 counties is less than 1 percent of the total public school enrollment. As in the past, the largest concentration of charter schools is in Philadelphia County, with charter school students comprising 7.9 percent of all public school enrollment. In short, while charter schools have offered educational choice to an increasing number of Pennsylvania residents, their impact on the total number of educational options remains limited.

Assessing the types of educational opportunities provided by charter schools is more difficult. Perhaps the most commonly used criterion for assessing the qualitative aspects of charter school choice is in terms of whether the schools are "innovative." According to the Charter School Appeals Board (CAB), an educational innovation consists of services and opportunities in a charter school that are not available in the school's host district. While the scope of the evaluation did not permit extensive and systematic charter-host comparisons of educational approaches, we were able to provide at least some assessment of this issue.

One often-mentioned innovation involves unique educational missions and philosophies, which include service to at-risk students, college preparation, character education, and the education of adjudicated youth. Other charter schools in the Commonwealth focus on vocational/career programs or science and technology. Some charter schools have unique cultural or bilingual programs that are reflected in the whole school program. Finally, many Pennsylvania charter schools are innovative in that they use nontraditional grade groupings (e.g., mixing elementary and middle grades) or multiage classrooms.

Charter schools often differ from their host district in terms of size and organization. As of the 2001-02 academic year, the median charter school enrolled 280 students, compared with approximately 540 for noncharter public schools. Charter schools may also vary from district schools in the number and timing of hours per day and/or days per year. For example, some charter schools include all-day kindergartens, after school programs, or year-round schedules. Cyber schools—which provide home-based instruction using computer technology—provide a unique and new form of public schooling that differs in the manner in which the curriculum is delivered.

Generally, charter school parents, students, and teachers appear to be quite satisfied with the curriculum and instruction in their schools. Nearly three-fourths of parents surveyed indicated that their child's academic performance was improving as a result of charter school attendance. Similarly, most parents and teachers reported that their school's mission was being adequately fulfilled. By contrast, one-half of parents indicated that they were satisfied with their school's financial resources and facilities. On all satisfaction indicators there was considerable school-to-school variation, with some schools reporting high levels of satisfaction and others low levels. The evaluators also considered self-reported charter school waiting lists as an indication of the extent to which families are "voting with their feet" for charter schools. While there was considerable variation among schools, the median charter school's waiting list comprised 28 percent of current enrollment during the 2001-02 academic year.

The satisfaction data, however, are subject to three important limitations. First, comparing charter schools' customer satisfaction with that of noncharter public schools was beyond the scope and budget of the study. Thus, we have no way of knowing whether satisfaction levels in charter schools are higher or lower than satisfaction levels in other schools. Second, there may be a tendency for respondents who chose charter schools to give positive ratings to their schools in large part because they chose the school (i.e., "it must be good if I chose it"). Finally, our finding that there is no apparent statistical relationship between student achievement and levels of satisfaction with curriculum and instruction suggests that customer satisfaction is not a suitable proxy for academic quality.

Policy Issues and Options

There is fervent disagreement over the desirability of school choice. Thus, stakeholders and policymakers are likely to disagree about whether the finding that charter-related school choice remains limited should count as a strength or a weakness of the Commonwealth's charter school initiative. While the evaluation team takes no position on this issue, the remainder of this section assumes provisionally that greater choice is a good thing and considers options for enhancing the range of choices provided by charter schools.

As for increasing the sheer number of charter school choices, one of the most commonly cited factors in determining the number of charter schools is the range of potential charter sponsors. Compared with many other states, Act 22 is relatively restrictive in limiting the granting of charters to LEAs and, in some cases, to the Charter Appeals Board (see chapter 3). Thus, one option for increasing the volume of charter schools is to allow universities, PDE, and other actors to grant charters. Of course, volume does not necessarily imply quality. Indeed, an evaluation of Michigan's charter school program (Miron & Nelson, 2002) suggested that the rapid growth in the number (over 180) of schools in that state may have outstripped the ability of many authorizers to hold the schools to high standards. Clearly, policymakers must be aware of a possible trade-off between the number and quality of charter schools.

Options for expanding the range of educational programs offered by charter schools are less straightforward. In an earlier evaluation of Pennsylvania charter schools (Miron & Nelson, 2000), we noted that some charter school operators were concerned that the CAB's definition of innovation as practices not already used by the host district might place founders seeking to open charter schools in large urban areas at a disadvantage. Indeed, the larger the host district, the more likely it is that a practice proposed by charter founders is already used somewhere in the district. The fact that the Commonwealth's largest urban district (Philadelphia) sponsors a relatively large number of charter schools might suggest that this is not a problem. However, there are likely other reasons that Philadelphia has a high concentration of charter schools (see chapter 4).

Another possible hindrance to innovations in charter schools lies in the newness of the schools and the relative inexperience of the staff. From one point of view, a new school with young staff might be more likely to innovate, given that they are likely less beholden to existing educational practices. Yet, literature on innovation in a variety of contexts (Rogers, 1995) indicates that innovations are most often introduced by larger organizations with a considerable amount of slack resources. Thus, it is possible that the relative youth and inexperience of charter school teachers and staff, along with the difficulties of working in a start-up organization, make it difficult to find the time necessary to develop innovative practices—a view expressed by several charter school CAOs during interviews.

As noted above, attempts to assess current charter school customers' satisfaction are limited by the absence of good comparative satisfaction data from noncharter public schools. Thus, should policymakers wish to make high stakes decisions about charter schools (either individually or collectively) on the basis of customer satisfaction, it would be wise to commission a study of satisfaction that explicitly makes comparisons between charter and noncharter public schools.[1]

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[1] See Gill, Timpane, Ross, and Brewer (2001) for a review of satisfaction studies with comparison groups completed as part of evaluations of voucher programs.

14.3 Equity and Access

Pennsylvania charter schools tend to be located in relatively large, poor urban communities (see chapter 4). This report assessed the extent to which charter schools' student populations reflect their communities' demographic characteristics. The issue of student demographic composition is particularly controversial given skeptics' criticisms that charter schools engage in cream-skimming practices and predictions that the schools will lead to greater segregation by race, ethnicity, and income.

Key Findings

On the whole, Pennsylvania charter schools have targeted communities and specific populations of students that need the most attention. Initially, the charter schools had far more minority students, students from low-income families, and at-risk students relative to their surrounding districts. Over the last four years, however, the students enrolled in charter schools have become more and more similar to the populations of students in the surrounding districts. In other words, they are more likely to be white, middle class, from two parent families, and more likely to be in lower elementary programs. This shift in populations is due mostly to the addition of new charter schools rather than changes in already existing schools.

For the 2001-02 school year, 37 percent of the students enrolled in the charter schools were white, compared with 46 percent in the host districts (see chapter 10). Fifty-six percent of the charter school students qualified for free and reduced lunch compared with 53 percent in the host districts.

While the aggregate of all charter schools is somewhat similar to the aggregate of all host districts, when we examined the data school by school, we found that the demographic characteristics of many charter schools differed greatly from the host districts, some with considerably more or only minority students and others with considerably fewer minority students than the host district. Some charter schools had few or no low-income students in districts with a high proportion of low-income families, while other charter schools in the same district enrolled noticeably more low-income students than the host district.

One area where charter schools continue to differ from host districts—both individually and in the aggregate—is in the proportion of students with disabilities they enroll. This is measured by the proportion of students with individualized education plans (IEPs). Within the 71 charter schools that reported IEP data for the 2001-02 school year, 8.5 percent of students had IEPs compared with the state average of 13 percent (these figures exclude gifted students). In general, students with IEPs who enrolled in charter schools were less likely to have moderate or severe disabilities than students with IEPs in the host districts. They were also far less likely to have gifted students. As with race and income, there was considerable variability among the charter schools in terms of the percent of students with IEPs they enroll. Of the 71 schools that reported IEP data, 53 schools enrolled a lower proportion of students with IEPs than the state average. Ten schools had fewer than 3 percent of their students with IEPs. At the other extreme, 18 of the 71 charter schools had a higher proportion of students with disabilities than the state average. The overall aggregate for the charter schools was weighted by the presence of 2 schools with 36 percent and 100 percent of their students with IEPs.

The apparent differences in students enrolled in charter schools and those enrolled in district schools are more likely due to parental choice than to conscious steps taken by charter schools to "structure" who applies and remains in their schools. For example, a charter school with a bilingual program or with an Afrocentric curriculum is likely to attract specific minority groups. The concentration of single ethnic groups in these instances is due to parental choice. Similarly, because of the newness of many charter schools, along with the relative inexperience of their staffs, some parents are understandably wary of sending their child with a disability to charter schools and charter schools similarly are wary of enrolling them.[2] Still, differences between charter schools and local districts may be a sign of trouble and should be investigated.

Policy Issues and Options

Just as in many other states, Pennsylvania charter schools differ greatly from their host districts in terms of demographic characteristics of their students. Because individual charter schools differ so greatly from their surrounding schools in terms of demographic characteristics, one possible consequence is that they result in local school districts being more segmented by race, social class, and ability. To fully understand this issue requires a closer examination of the changes in district enrollments.

A key dilemma is the potential conflict between choice and equity in charter schools. On the one hand, charter schools, as schools of choice, are supposed to develop coherent and focused missions. Market theory suggests that such coherence is often accomplished through a process of market sorting,[3] whereby customers choose schools that best satisfy their educational preferences. Coherence, in turn, is thought to promote a more efficient use of resources and improved academic outcomes.[4] On the other hand, federal guidelines assert that charter schools which receive federal start-up funds should recruit from all segments of the districts and that they accept all comers (subject to waiting list lotteries and sibling preferences).[5] These guidelines assert that charter schools should not engage in selective recruiting or counseling out students who might not "buy into" or fit the school's mission. Thus, in some cases, compliance with federal expectations concerning equity and access might undermine a school's ability to develop the kind of mission coherence envisioned by theories of market choice. We are not suggesting that the goals of choice and equity are fundamentally incompatible, only that at some point pursuit of one might hinder pursuit of the other. In any event, policymakers should remain mindful of this trade-off when addressing equity issues pertaining to charter schools.

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[2] Indeed, a single severely disabled student could overwhelm a small charter school's staff and resources. Yet, the federal IDEA leaves little or no room for states to give charter schools enhanced flexibility over special education issues.

[3] This process is often called Tiebout sorting. See Miron and Nelson (2002, Chapter 1) for a nontechnical discussion of this sorting process.

[4] See Hill, Pierce, and Guthrie (1997) and Miron and Nelson (2002) for discussions of the hypothesized link between coherence and outcomes. See Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, and Bryk (2001) for empirical evidence supporting the hypothesized connection.

While solutions to the concerns and the dilemma noted above will probably not come easily, it seems clear that LEAs must be part of any approach to address them. In providing oversight, the local districts that host the charter schools and the Pennsylvania Department of Education might examine more closely the recruiting and selection procedures used by schools.

14.4 Professional Opportunities for Teachers

Pennsylvania's charter school initiative seeks to create direct benefits for public school teachers through the creation of new and enhanced professional opportunities. Additionally, charter schools are expected to allow educators an opportunity to innovate and at the same time be held accountable for their work. In Chapter 8 we explored these topics and described the working conditions of teachers and their levels of satisfaction with their schools.

Key Findings

Analyses of professional opportunities for teachers are typically divided into assessments of classroom autonomy and opportunities for influence in schoolwide decisions (e.g., Nelson & Miron, 2002). Surveys of Pennsylvania charter school teachers indicate that nearly two-thirds believe that they have autonomy in the classroom, compared with 39 percent who reported they have influence in schoolwide decisions. Similar differences between perceptions of the classroom and the school at large have been found in noncharter public schools (see, e.g., Ingersoll, 1996).

Another frequently discussed aspect of teacher professionalism is the existence of a shared professional culture in the school (see, e.g., Marks & Louis, 1997). Here, we found that 72 percent of teachers surveyed were satisfied with their school's mission and that 60 percent thought that other teachers were committed to the mission. In total, 57 percent of the teachers were satisfied with the school's ability to fulfill the mission. While making charter-noncharter comparisons was beyond the scope of the study, survey results indicate that slightly fewer than half (44 percent) of charter school teachers think professional opportunities in their school are new.

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[5] See <http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/fr/civil_rights.htm>

As with many of the findings in this evaluation, there was considerable school-to-school variation in perceived professional opportunities. Also, teachers typically reported fairly large gaps between initial expectations and current reality in their charter schools. While it is unclear whether teachers' initial expectations were reasonable or not, it is clear that teachers are leaving charter schools in far higher numbers than those in other public schools. Indeed, during the 2000-01 academic year, some 24 percent of charter school teachers left their schools (with most remaining in education) compared with 9 percent for district schools. Charter-noncharter differences in attrition persisted even after we controlled for differences in average teacher experience and community characteristics.

While determining the reasons for teacher attrition was beyond the scope of the report, one likely candidate is teacher salaries. As of the 2000-01 academic year, the typical charter school paid its teachers approximately $12,000 less per year than noncharter public schools with similar teachers. The hypothesized link between teacher salaries and attrition was supported by interviews with teachers and CAOs.

Policy Issues and Options

Perhaps the most salient policy issue raised by the findings on teachers is the high rate of teacher attrition in charter schools. A certain amount of attrition is probably healthy—especially in a charter school—when it means that teachers who might not agree with a school's mission make room for those who do. Nonetheless, high attrition rates are a source of concern for a number of reasons. First, start-up organizations often require a core group of committed individuals with relevant skills and institutional memory. While the attrition data cited above cannot tell us whether such a core exists in most schools, high attrition rates make it questionable at least. Second, teacher attrition diminishes the effectiveness of investments in charter school teacher capacity made by PDE, foundations, nonprofits, and other funders. Indeed, a high attrition rate diminishes the odds that a teacher receiving such training will be around long enough to put it to good use. Third, the constant addition of new staff members might make it more difficult for charter schools to get beyond basic functions to develop and implement innovative practices. Finally, high turnover can be a detriment to school morale and ultimately to student learning.

Given the potential negative effects of high teacher attrition, the issue deserves closer scrutiny by policymakers. Researchers and evaluators might aid this scrutiny with further investigation into both the causes and consequences of teacher attrition in charter schools. Given the hypothesized link between salary and attrition, it might be useful to investigate further our finding that while charter schools receive nearly as much money per pupil as noncharter public schools, their teacher salaries are considerably less (see chapter 5). An earlier evaluation of Pennsylvania charter schools suggested that some of the funds that might otherwise go to teacher salaries are used for start-up expenses (Miron & Nelson, 2000). This issue deserves further exploration.

14.5 Accountability and Oversight

As previously noted, charter schools receive their autonomy in exchange for enhanced accountability. Such accountability comes in several forms. First, and perhaps most important, is performance accountability. This refers to student academic growth as well as to meeting the specific mission-related goals and objectives specified in the charter contract. Second, since charter schools are schools of choice, they are accountable to consumers in the marketplace (i.e., market accountability). Third, regulatory accountability refers to compliance with existing federal and state regulations.

In this section we consider another form of accountability that is unique to the charter concept—accountability for the goals set out in the chartering document itself. Given that LEAs have primary responsibility for ensuring that these goals are met, a related question is how well LEAs discharge their oversight responsibilities.

Key Findings

Relative to other states, the Office of Education Initiatives at the Pennsylvania Department of Education has done a remarkable job of providing targeted technical assistance and support for new charter schools. It has used both "carrots" and "sticks" to ensure that new charter schools apply for all available resources (both federal and state). All divisions and units at PDE have been responsive to questions and requests for assistance from charter schools. The technical assistance provided by PDE and the resource centers found at each end of the state have helped make charter schools aware of relevant laws and regulations and better prepared to complete and submit the litany of reports and forms required for all public schools.

Findings pertinent to performance and market accountability were discussed earlier, so we now examine accountability to school-specific goals as well as regulatory accountability. The annual reports that charter schools are required to prepare provide an excellent mechanism for charter schools to demonstrate success to parents, media, and other audiences. These annual reports contain an array of information about each school. Specifically, they provide documentation relevant to compliance with regulations and the school's progress toward fulfilling its mission-specific goals. The overall quality of the mission-specific goals and measurable objectives has improved in recent years in terms of clarity, scope, and measurability. Ratings for the scope of coverage, measurability, and scope of evidence were all significantly higher for the schools who used a new PDE annual report format rather than the older format. However, as a whole, the schools still did not provide enough information to determine whether or not they were meeting their mission-specific goals. Furthermore, many of the goals and measurable objectives listed by charter schools still focus on processes rather than outcomes.

Because they issue the charter, local school districts or LEAs are primarily responsible for oversight of charter schools. The LEAs, however, have varied considerably in their understanding of oversight responsibilities. Some LEAs have requested completion of specific forms and reports for the district, while others make no formal requests for information from the charter schools. A few districts have conducted what we might consider a compliance visit, while others only visit for ceremonial purposes. In Philadelphia and in many other parts of the Commonwealth, most charter schools report that they receive no visits at all from representatives of the sponsoring LEAs.[6] We did find that local districts engaged in oversight activities just before charter contracts came up for renewal.

PDE has been responsible only for compliance visits related to the federal funds that charter schools receive. These visits have typically involved question and answer periods with the CAOs and no review of documentation and evidence to support responses. In recent years, as the number of schools has increased and as the Office of Education Initiatives at PDE has taken on more responsibilities for other reforms or initiatives, the frequency of site visits has decreased considerably. In addition to the federal compliance visits, the Commonwealth's Auditor General (AG) has conducted very rigorous compliance visits to 21 charter schools thus far. On the whole, the charter schools had slightly more reported findings of noncompliance than their host districts[7], but the nature of most of the findings was such that they could easily be addressed by charter schools.

Revocation or nonrenewal of a charter is the strongest action that can be taken by LEAs. Thus far, only two charter schools have been closed in Pennsylvania, which represents a much lower proportion of closures than found in other states. This would suggest that charter schools are doing an extremely good job, or it could imply that LEAs are lax in providing oversight.

Policy Issues and Options

The findings discussed above suggest a number of possible approaches for consolidating and building upon improvements in Pennsylvania charter school accountability. First, PDE should continue to improve and streamline its annual report format. Moreover, it would be wise to continue searching for other ways to improve the format including, but not limited to, clarifying definitions of key concepts and ensuring 100 percent response rates to all questions. Ideally, these reports should be posted on the Web so that they would be more easily accessible to LEAs, parents, and other interested groups. PDE already has extensive data on schools posted on its Web site.

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[6] The School District of Philadelphia–having done little charter school oversight–planned to conduct extensive site visits at schools that were coming up for renewal in 2000. At that time, however, the charter schools and PDE representatives protested, claiming that such visits would be redundant and disruptive. Instead, it was suggested that the district could receive the information obtained from PDE site visits. Even after a formal request, however, this information was never shared with district officials. In September 2002, Philadelphia announced a new plan for "intensive evaluation" of several district schools–including 14 charter schools facing renewal. This will include site visits and examination of academic achievement, school safety, and financial stability.

[7] Host district audits covered school years ranging from 1993-1994 through 2000-2001.

Second, policymakers should consider undertaking a systematic assessment of LEAs' capacity (both human and fiscal) to provide meaningful, timely, and consistent oversight of the charter schools they sponsor. PDE might then be able to provide technical assistance targeted to areas of greatest need. Similarly, policymakers should consider a review of the current division of labor between PDE and LEA on issues of oversight. This might provide an opportunity to clarify roles and to direct resources to areas of highest need. Act 22 is clear that LEA overseers are an important partner in assuring quality in charter schools and should be an integral part of attempts to improve charter school quality and accountability.

Now that the state has to provide oversight to more schools, one strategy might be to provide differentiated or targeted oversight. Schools that are beyond the start-up phase and have demonstrated regulatory accountability evidenced by their AG audit and by their timely submission of requested forms and reports might receive less oversight and fewer compliance visits. Instead, resources could be focused on supporting and providing oversight to new schools or schools that have not demonstrated accountability.

A particularly important issue regarding LEA oversight is the need to ensure that LEA feedback to charter schools is timely and not concentrated in the period immediately preceding charter renewal. Such just-in-time oversight often fails to provide charter schools with an opportunity to make improvements. Moreover, the uncertainty created by such a just-in-time approach makes planning difficult for both charter and noncharter schools alike.

It would be naive to ignore the real conflicts of goals and interests that often characterize charter-LEA relationships (see chapter 9). We suspect that a certain amount of political and economic conflict between the two is inevitable. Yet, we also believe that LEA engagement with charter schools throughout the term of the charter (not just during the renewal process) would provide more opportunities for charter schools and LEAs to find win-win approaches to these conflicts.

14.6 Impacts on Other Public Schools

Act 22 envisions that charter schools will have positive impacts, not only on their own students, but also on students in noncharter schools. Such "spillover" effects might come through two mechanisms. First, charter schools might develop innovations that are shared in a collaborative fashion with educators in noncharter schools. Second, the diffusion of charter school practices can come in response to competition and the loss of students. In response to this, local districts might take steps to improve their services, become more responsive to consumers, and perhaps even implement innovations found in charter schools. This competitive model of improvement does not assume cooperation between charter and noncharter schools.

Key Findings

Charter school impacts on noncharter schools can be grouped into four categories: financial, administrative, educational, and demographic. Beginning with financial impacts, representatives from districts with a large number of charter schools emphasized during interviews that charter schools were siphoning off already limited resources.

Among the difficulties in assessing financial impacts is the problem of estimating net impacts. First, when students leave a noncharter public school for a charter school, they take with them most of their per-pupil funding allocation. At the same time, the departure of students reduces the demand for—and thereby the costs of—educational services provided by the district. District officials point out, however, that there is rarely a one-to-one correspondence between student losses and resulting decreases in educational costs. This is because there are often considerable fixed costs that must be covered (e.g., salary for a Spanish teacher teaching 30 students costs as much as for 25 students). Second, net financial impact depends upon the types of students leaving noncharter public schools, since the departure of needier, more costly to educate students might actually improve a district school's financial position. A third, more difficult, policy issue is whether financial losses experienced by district schools might be justified by achievement gains in charter schools. Indeed, market competition almost always puts some players (presumably the weaker performers) at a financial disadvantage. The true test on this perspective is whether competition leads to a more effective educational system.

Turning to administrative impacts, some district representatives reported that the movement of students into and out of charter schools was creating an intolerable level of instability and uncertainty for public school administrators. Problems with completing paperwork and transferring student files has also been complicated by families that double enroll in both a charter school and their host district. As with financial impacts, the final evaluation of administrative impacts might depend on whether competition is improving educational outcomes. Indeed, markets are often characterized by frequent movement of customers from one service provider to another. As with producers in any market, school districts are faced with the challenge of planning for changes in the size and composition of their customer base.

In terms of educational impacts, we saw little evidence of change in traditional public schools in response to the presence of charter schools. While achievement trends were slightly more positive in charter schools than in demographically similar schools, we have no evidence as to whether noncharter public schools in the proximity of charter schools were also improving.[8]

The extent of innovation diffusion between charter schools and noncharter schools appears to be related to the nature of the charter-host district relationship.

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[8] Past attempts at estimating charter school impacts on district student achievement have run into thorny research design issues. See, e.g., Bettinger (1999) and Eberts and Hollenbeck (2001).

In districts where there is either indifference or overt hostility between the two school systems, sharing of innovations is generally negligible. However, competitive diffusion of innovation can occur even in districts with adversarial relations with their charter schools. In one case we examined, two neighboring school districts, one of which had a very contentious relationship with its charter school, each established its own all-day kindergarten in response to a popular all-day kindergarten at the local charter school.

Other districts enjoyed cooperative relationships with the charter schools, especially where the charter school served a unique population (e.g., at-risk students) and thus are not seen as direct competitors. There were some examples of collaborations between the charter schools and the district schools, but these were rare. In general, relations between the charter schools and the hosts were improving, even in districts where relationships had originally been quite inimical. If negative or apathetic attitudes continue to dissipate and communication continues to improve, charter schools' may have a more positive impact on their respective districts. Similarly, if more districts feel the competition of charter schools, they may be spurred into reforming themselves in order to prevent attrition to the charter schools.

Policy Issues and Options

Given that Act 22 was designed, in part, to have positive educational impacts on charter public schools, the findings above would suggest that this is an area of current weakness in the initiative. Thus, it is appropriate to consider strategies for increasing charter schools' positive spillovers.

As discussed above, educational practices can diffuse from one school to another through two sets of processes: competitive and collegial. If policymakers value competition among schools, one way to leverage diffusion would be to increase the number of charter schools. A study of Michigan found that the greatest impacts were in urban areas of the state that have large concentrations of charter school enrollments (Miron & Nelson, 2002). On the other hand, if one believes that the competitive model is inappropriate, efforts might be made to increase communication among charter and noncharter public schools. Professional development activities, such as those sponsored by Intermediate Units or the state might be organized to include a balance or mix of teachers from charter and noncharter schools. Several charter schools have already partnered with local districts to apply for specific grants, resulting in enhanced communication between the two groups of educators.

Another approach that might increase cooperative diffusion of innovations would be continuation and expansion of transitional impact aid for districts to offset losses due to charter enrollments. Impact aid, however, might undercut the effectiveness of competition by easing the pressure on noncharter public schools. Thus, policymakers must decide how much they value competition among schools as part of any decisions about transitional impact aid. As others have noted, discussions about the appropriateness of competition should take into account its effects on students whose parents do not exercise choice (see, e.g., Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996).

14.7 Future Evaluation Activities

This evaluation raises several areas in need of further study. Some are beyond the scope of this project. Others, however, will be addressed in our 2003 report. First, we plan to conduct an in-depth cost analysis and explore links between costs and school outcomes. Second, we will seek to identify the correlates of charter school success–that is, what are the common practices, structures, and resources of successful charter schools? This information could aid both charter school operators and authorizers. We will also examine district enrollment patterns and how these are affected by the presence of charter schools. We will explore the issue of how charter schools approved on appeal will fare in what is likely to be a hostile LEA environment. Finally, we will further examine innovative practices in the schools with the intent of understanding how these can be shared or applied in other schools. We will also explore a number of policy issues raised in this report. By engaging stakeholders and policymakers in this discussion, we hope to identify specific steps that can be taken to strengthen the charter school reform in Pennsylvania.

14.8 Conclusion

This evaluation report set out to assess Pennsylvania charter schools against the goals enumerated in Act 22 and related criteria. As is typically the case with relatively new programs, there appear to be areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.

☐ *Achievement.* Overall, charter schools are making modest achievement gains against demographically and geographically similar schools. Unfortunately, these gains are not uniform, with some schools experiencing sharp declines and others impressive gains.

☐ *Innovation and choice.* Considerable growth in the number of charter schools has increased their availability as a viable educational option. However, large segments of the Commonwealth have no charter schools and not all charter schools offer unique alternatives to the traditional public schools. Charter school customers are generally satisfied with curriculum and instruction, though less so with facilities and resources.

☐ *Equity and access.* Charter-host differences in the enrollment of low income, minority, and special education students, while not decisive evidence, identifies equity and access as areas worthy of further attention from policymakers.

☐ *Teacher professional opportunities*. Teachers are generally satisfied with their working conditions, but leave charter schools in high numbers. The charter schools have less experienced and less qualified teachers than comparable districts. Pay scales and relative teacher salaries are considerably lower at charter schools than in similar districts.

☐ *Accountability and oversight.* PDE has done a remarkable job of providing technical assistance to charter schools, making them aware of relevant rules and regulations. The quality of school mission statements and reports has improved over time, but is in need of further improvement. LEA and PDE oversight is in need of additional improvement and coordination. While the

Auditor General conducts rigorous compliance visits, thus far, only 21 charter schools have been audited.

- ☐ *Impacts on other public schools.* While charter schools, by design, take money away from noncharter public schools, their net financial impact remains unclear. There appears to be minimal diffusion of innovations from charter to noncharter public schools.

The extent to which each of these areas deserves attention depends, of course, on how policymakers weigh each criterion. By providing important data and raising key policy issues, this report has sought to make a sound contribution to the debate over the Commonwealth's charter schools.

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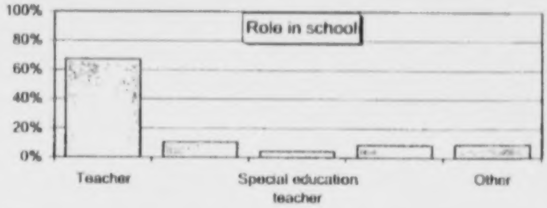
Totals for All Pennsylvania Charter School Teachers/Staff

2001-02 WMU Charter School Survey
Descriptive Statistics

Informant Group: **Teachers/Staff (N=1,706)**

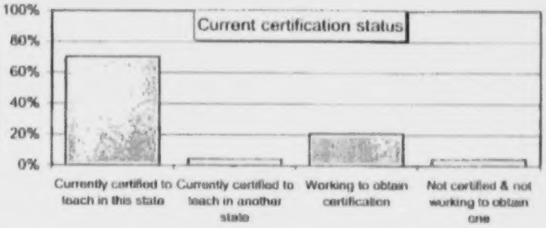
1. What is your primary role at this school?

	Teacher	Teaching assistant	Special education teacher	Principal/director	Other	Total	Missing
N	1140	179	72	150	155	1696	10
%	67.2%	10.6%	4.2%	8.8%	9.1%	100.0%	



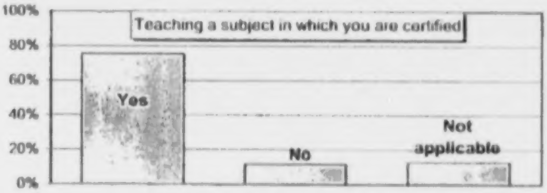
2. What is your current teaching certification status (teachers only)?

	Currently certified to teach in this state	Currently certified to teach in another state	Working to obtain certification	Not certified and not working to obtain certification	Total
N	838	51	249	52	1190
%	70.4%	4.3%	20.9%	4.4%	100.0%



3. Are you teaching in a subject area in which you are certified to teach? (teachers only)

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Total
N	896	137	154	1187
%	75.5%	11.5%	13.0%	100.0%

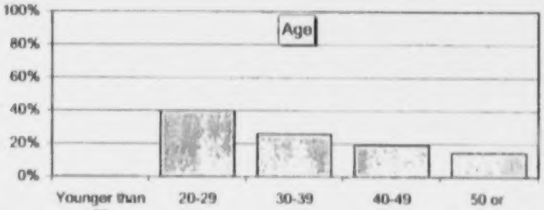


4. With which grade do you mostly work?

	Grade Level															
	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Not applicable	Total	Missing
N	148	134	114	104	84	98	101	80	78	122	94	54	50	356	1617	89
%	9.2%	8.3%	7.1%	6.4%	5.2%	6.1%	6.2%	4.9%	4.8%	7.5%	5.8%	3.3%	3.1%	22.0%	100.0%	

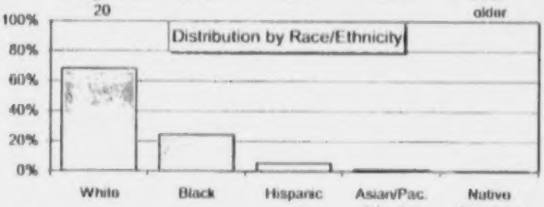
5. What is your age?

	Younger than 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50 or older	Total	Missing
N	5	671	433	322	245	1676	30
%	0.3%	40.0%	25.8%	19.2%	14.6%	100.0%	



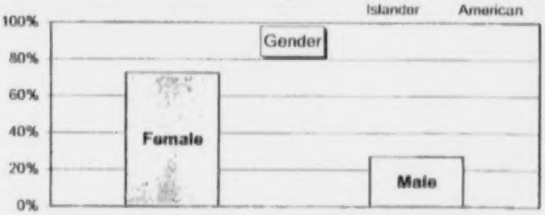
6. What is your race/ethnicity?

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pac Islander	Native American	Total	Missing
N	1125	402	87	25	8	1647	59
%	68.3%	24.4%	5.3%	1.5%	0.5%	100.0%	



7. What is your gender?

	Female	Male	Total	Missing
N	1102	412	1514	192
%	72.8%	27.2%	100.0%	



Note: Questions 2 and 3 include the responses from only those staff who indicated that they were teachers.

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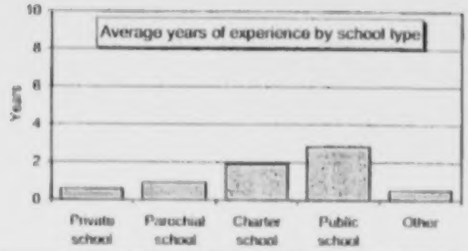
8. How many years of experience have you had in each of these types of schools (teachers only)

	Private school	Parochial school	Charter school	Public school	Other	Total	Total (excluding "other")
Mean	0.59	0.93	1.91	2.84	0.51	6.78	6.27
STD	2.15	3.02	1.04	5.74	2.10	7.05	6.76

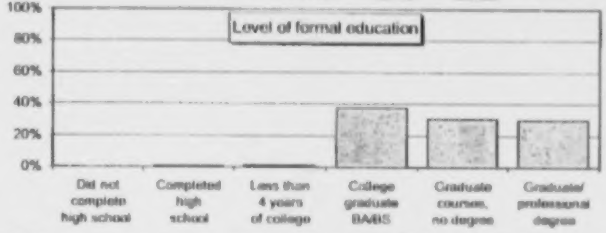
9. Years at current school?

Years at current school
1.87
1.02



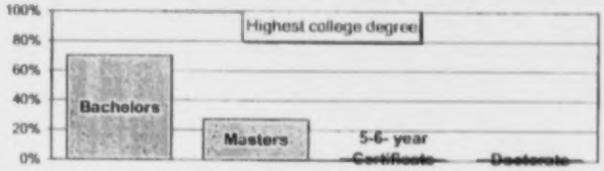
10. How much formal education have you had (teachers only)

	Did not complete high school	Completed high school	Less than 4 years of college	College graduate BA/BS	Graduate courses, no degree	Graduate/ professional degree	Total
N	0	7	11	438	356	347	1159
%	0.0%	0.6%	0.9%	37.8%	30.7%	29.9%	100.0%



11 What is the highest college degree you hold? (teachers only)

	Bachelors	Masters	5-6- year Certificate	Doctorate	Total
N	829	325	15	11	1180
%	70.3%	27.5%	1.3%	0.9%	100.0%

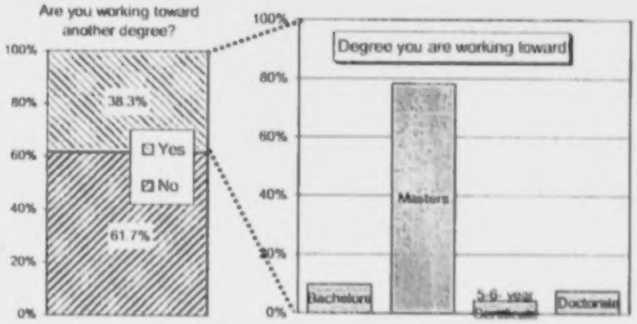


12a. Are you working toward another degree at this time?

	No	Yes	Total	Missing
N	1026	638	1664	42
%	61.7%	38.3%	100.0%	

12b. If yes, what degree?

	Bachelors	Masters	5-6- year Certificate	Doctorate	Total	Missing
N	63	506	28	50	647	1059
%	9.7%	78.2%	4.3%	7.7%	100.0%	

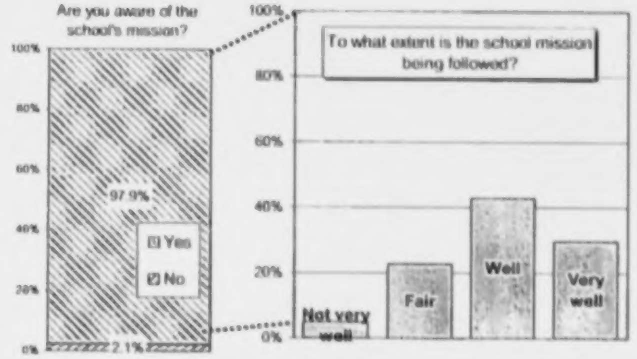


13a. Are you aware of the school's mission?

	No	Yes	Total	Missing
N	36	1654	1690	16
%	2.1%	97.9%	100.0%	

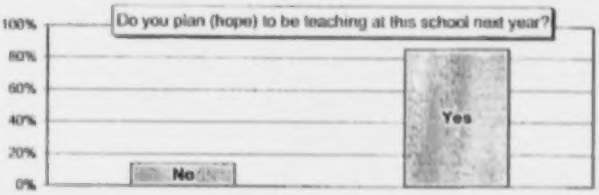
13b. If yes, to what extent is the mission being followed by the school?

	Not very well 1	Fair 2	Well 3	Very well 4	Total	Missing
N	82	373	708	489	1652	54
%	5.0%	22.6%	42.9%	29.6%	100.0%	



14. Do you plan (hope) to be working at this school next year?

	No	Yes	Total	Missing
N	217	1335	1552	154
%	14.0%	86.0%	100.0%	



Note: Questions 8, 9, 10 and 11 include the responses from only those staff who indicated that they were teachers

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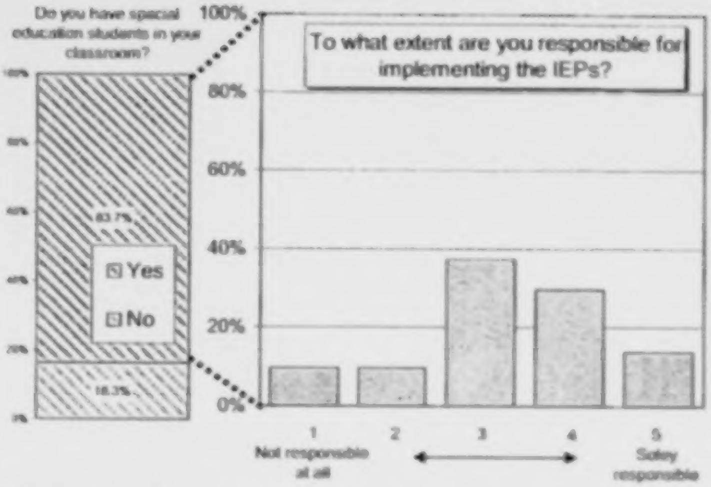
15a. If you are a classroom teacher, do you have students identified for special education services in your classes?

	No	Yes	Total	Missing
N	185	949	1134	572
%	16.3%	83.7%	100.0%	

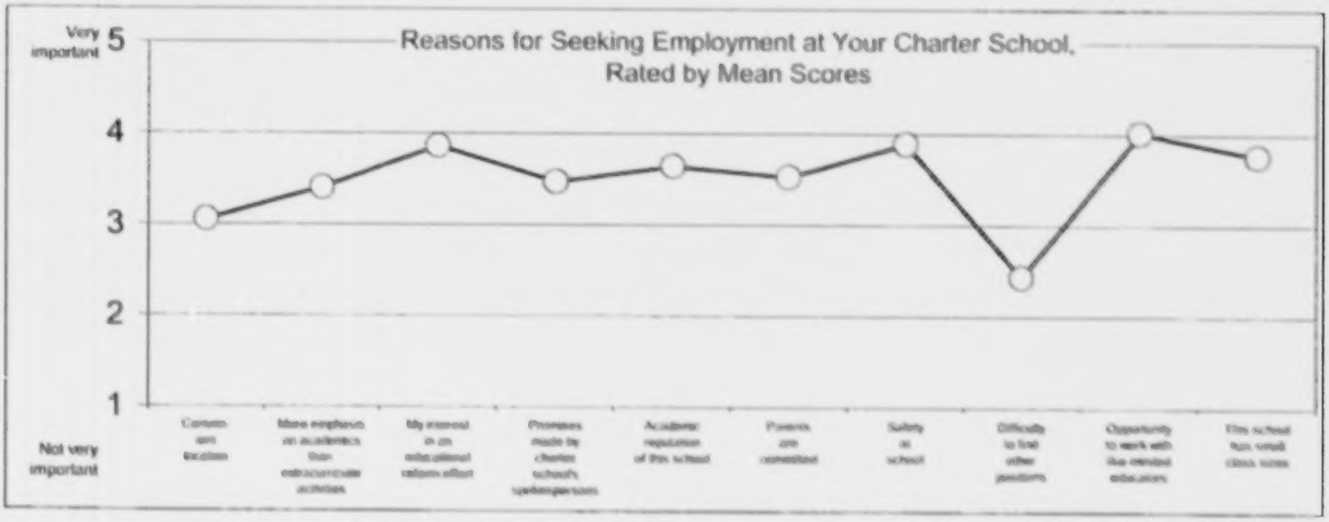
15b. If yes, to what extent are you responsible for implementing the IEPs?

	Not responsible at all ←→ 1	2	3	4	Solely responsible 5	Total	Missing
N	96	96	367	291	135	985	721
%	9.7%	9.7%	37.3%	29.5%	13.7%	100.0%	



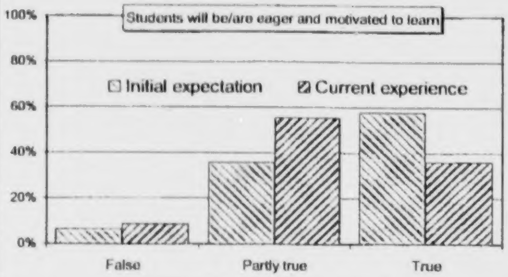
16. Rate the importance of the following factors in your decision to seek employment at this school.

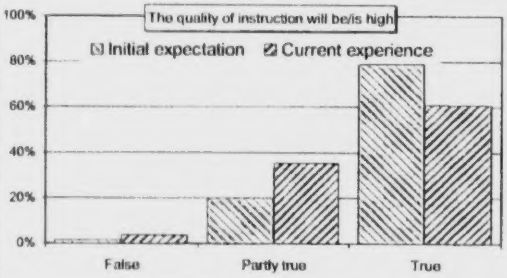
	Percentages: Not important 1	2	3	4	Very important 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Missing
Convenient location	19.9%	13.7%	28.1%	18.2%	20.0%	3.06	1.38	3	1688	18
More emphasis on academics as opposed to extracurricular activities	10.0%	8.8%	32.2%	29.7%	19.3%	3.40	1.18	3	1673	33
My interest in being involved in an educational reform effort	4.6%	6.8%	20.8%	33.3%	34.6%	3.86	1.10	4	1667	39
Promises made by charter school's spokespersons	11.0%	10.3%	24.9%	28.2%	25.6%	3.47	1.28	4	1665	41
Academic reputation (high standards) of this school	7.9%	7.0%	27.7%	27.5%	29.8%	3.64	1.20	4	1662	44
Parents are committed	9.5%	10.1%	26.0%	28.0%	26.3%	3.52	1.24	4	1676	30
Safety at school	5.9%	7.8%	18.8%	26.0%	41.5%	3.89	1.20	4	1669	37
Difficulty to find other positions	39.4%	15.5%	20.4%	12.2%	12.5%	2.43	1.42	2	1654	52
Opportunity to work with like-minded educators	3.1%	4.1%	18.9%	36.1%	37.7%	4.01	1.00	4	1663	43
This school has small class sizes	8.2%	6.9%	23.2%	24.1%	37.5%	3.76	1.25	4	1665	41

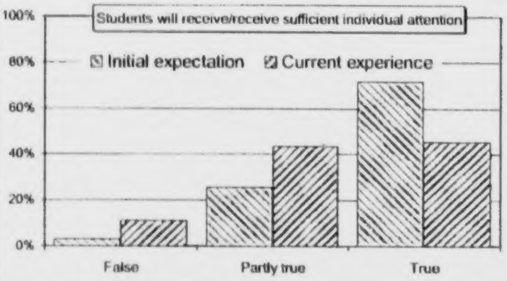


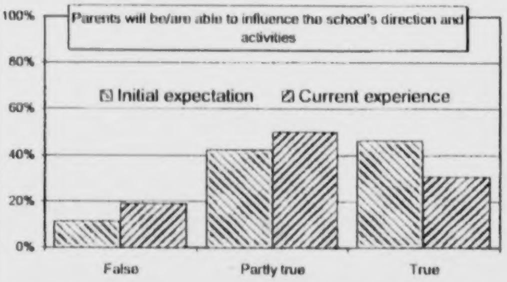
17. Rate each of the following statements as to what you expected when you first began working at this school (initial expectation) and how you would rate it today (current experience).

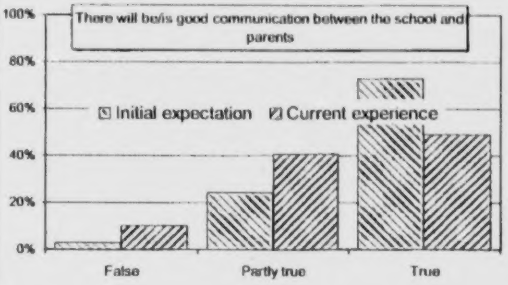
	Initial Expectation							Current Experience						
	False 1	Partly True 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing	False 1	Partly true 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing
Students will be/are eager and motivated to learn	6.6%	35.6%	57.8%	2.51	0.62	69	36	8.6%	55.4%	36.0%	2.27	0.61	11	48
The quality of instruction will be/is high	1.4%	19.9%	78.8%	2.77	0.45	63	57	3.7%	35.4%	60.9%	2.57	0.56	14	70
Students will receive/ receive sufficient individual attention	2.8%	25.5%	71.7%	2.69	0.52	75	56	11.0%	43.6%	45.4%	2.34	0.67	8	68
Parents will be/are able to influence the direction and activities at the school	11.3%	42.3%	46.4%	2.35	0.67	174	44	19.1%	50.1%	30.8%	2.12	0.70	66	61
There will be/is good communication between the school and parents/ guardians	3.0%	24.2%	72.8%	2.70	0.52	82	44	10.3%	40.7%	49.1%	2.39	0.67	9	54





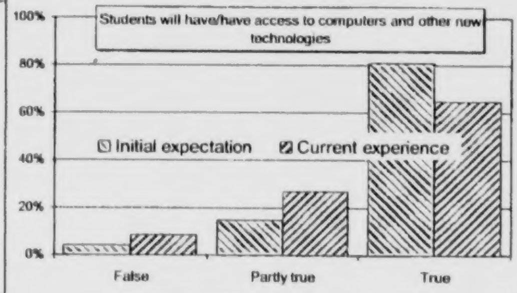


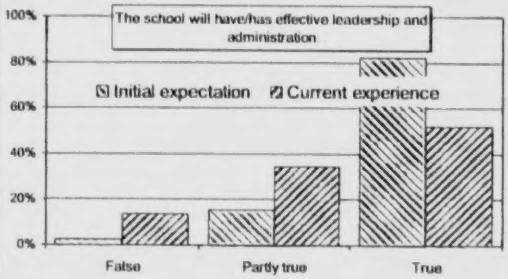


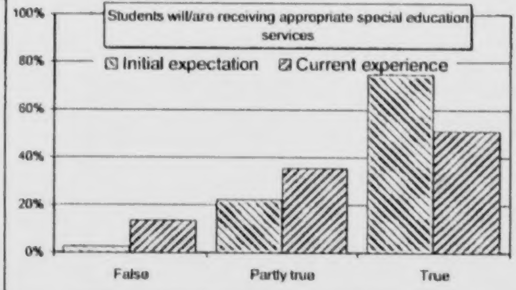


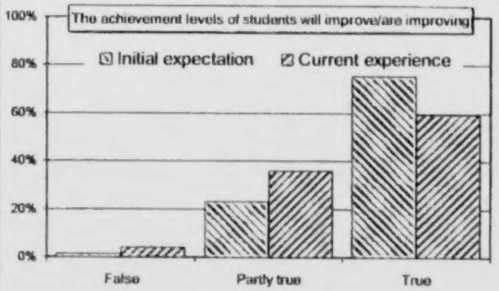
17. Rate each of the following statements as to what you expected when you first began working at this school (initial expectation) and how you would rate it today (current experience).

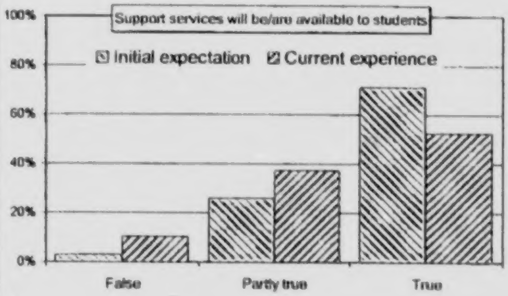
	Initial Expectation							Current Experience						
	False 1	Partly True 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing	False 1	Partly true 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing
Students will have/have access to computers and other new technologies	4.2%	14.8%	81.0%	2.77	0.51	77	42	8.5%	26.8%	64.7%	2.56	0.64	4	51
The school will have/has effective leadership and administration	2.3%	15.5%	82.2%	2.80	0.46	66	45	13.5%	34.4%	52.1%	2.39	0.71	14	55
Students will/are receiving appropriate special education services, if necessary.	2.6%	22.4%	75.0%	2.72	0.50	193	37	13.6%	35.4%	51.1%	2.38	0.71	67	47
The achievement levels of students will improve/are improving	1.4%	23.1%	75.6%	2.74	0.47	125	46	4.3%	36.2%	59.5%	2.55	0.58	82	53
Support services (i.e., counseling, health care, etc.) will be/are available to students	2.9%	25.9%	71.1%	2.68	0.53	178	36	10.2%	37.2%	52.6%	2.42	0.67	40	50





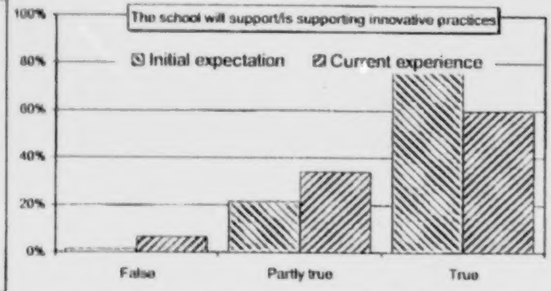


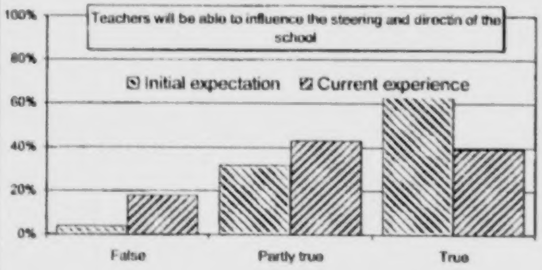


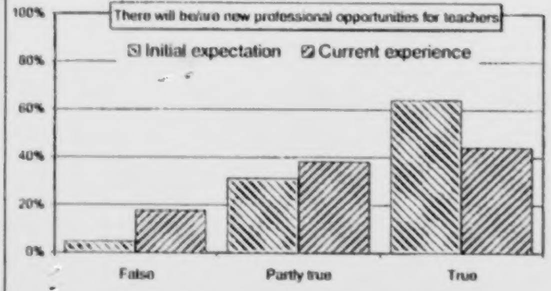


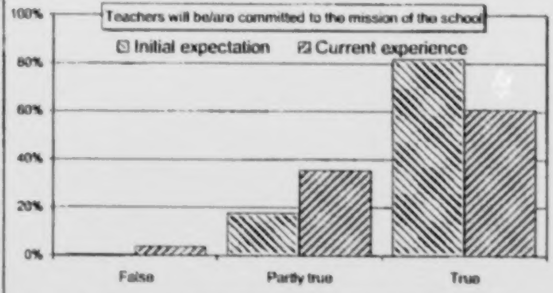
17. Rate each of the following statements as to what you expected when you first began working at this school (initial expectation) and how you would rate it today (current experience).

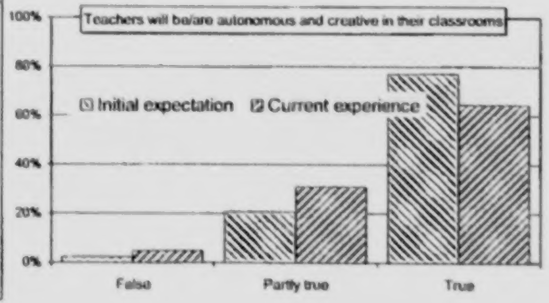
	Initial Expectation							Current Experience						
	False 1	Partly True 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing	False 1	Partly true 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing
The school will support/is supporting innovative practices	1.3%	21.6%	77.1%	2.76	0.46	125	45	6.4%	33.9%	59.6%	2.53	0.61	66	54
Teachers will be able to influence the steering and direction of the school	3.9%	31.9%	64.2%	2.60	0.56	152	44	17.9%	42.9%	39.2%	2.21	0.72	50	56
There will be/are new professional opportunities for teachers	4.7%	31.2%	64.1%	2.59	0.58	265	39	17.6%	38.2%	44.1%	2.26	0.74	168	53
Teachers will be/are committed to the mission of the school	0.5%	17.8%	81.7%	2.81	0.40	114	45	3.7%	35.6%	60.7%	2.57	0.56	47	54
Teachers will be/are autonomous and creative in their classrooms	2.3%	20.7%	77.0%	2.75	0.48	134	39	4.7%	31.0%	64.3%	2.60	0.58	59	50







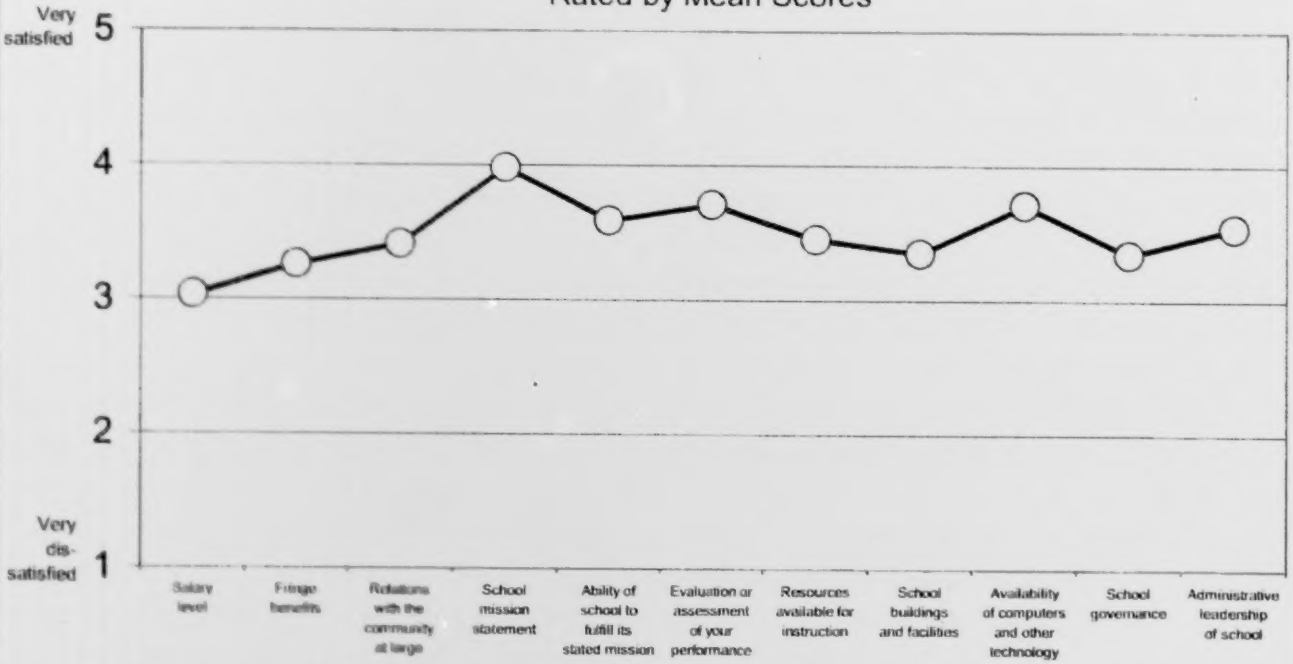




18. Rate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects or features of your school.

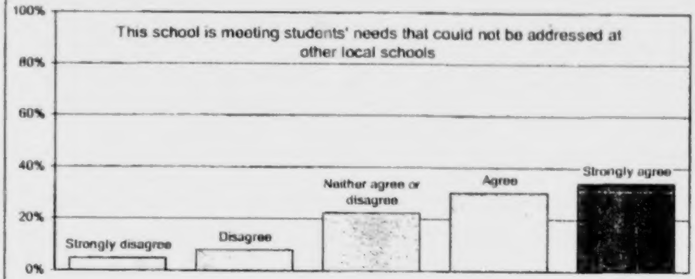
	Percentages Not very satisfied 1	2	3	4	Very satisfied 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Missing
Salary level	10.9%	18.6%	37.9%	21.8%	10.7%	3.03	1.13	3	1668	14	24
Fringe benefits	9.3%	15.1%	32.2%	27.0%	16.4%	3.26	1.18	3	1588	81	37
Relations with the community at large	3.3%	11.9%	40.2%	29.8%	14.7%	3.41	0.99	3	1583	91	32
School mission statement	2.0%	4.4%	22.4%	35.6%	35.6%	3.98	0.97	4	1649	30	27
Ability of the school to fulfill its stated mission	5.1%	10.5%	27.0%	34.9%	22.5%	3.59	1.10	4	1639	30	37
Evaluation or assessment of your performance	6.3%	8.4%	21.8%	35.5%	28.0%	3.71	1.15	4	1527	143	36
Resources available for instruction	8.7%	13.5%	26.2%	27.7%	23.9%	3.45	1.23	4	1638	30	38
School buildings and facilities	9.2%	17.0%	26.2%	24.5%	23.0%	3.35	1.26	3	1655	11	40
Availability of computers and other technology	6.8%	11.7%	20.2%	26.0%	35.3%	3.71	1.25	4	1669	9	28
School governance	9.0%	13.9%	31.2%	26.0%	19.8%	3.34	1.20	3	1608	65	33
Administrative leadership of school	9.5%	12.2%	23.3%	24.9%	30.0%	3.54	1.29	4	1668	12	26

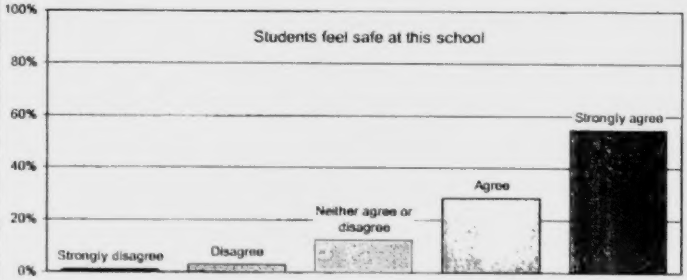
Level of Satisfaction with Aspects or Features of Your School, Rated by Mean Scores

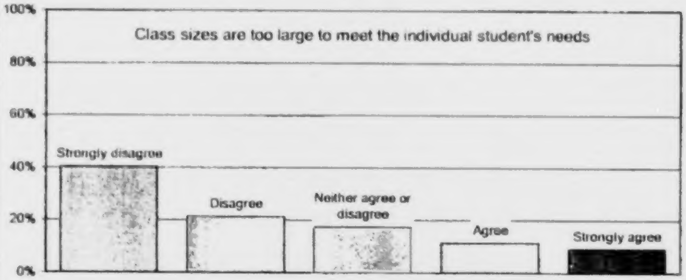


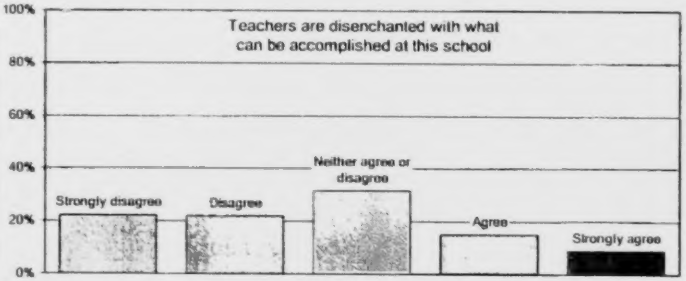
19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

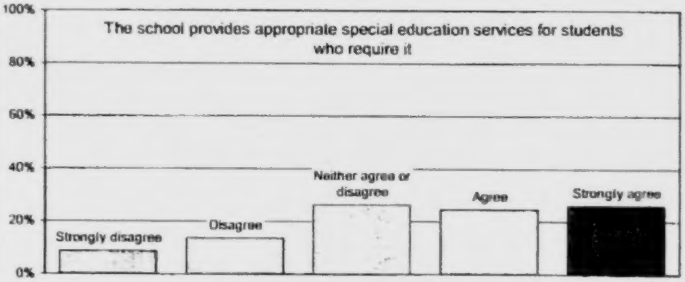
	Strongly disagree 1	2	← → 3	4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	N	Don't know	Mis-sing
This school is meeting students' needs that could not be addressed at other local schools	4.8%	8.1%	22.4%	30.4%	34.3%	3.81	1.13	1597	76	33
Students feel safe at this school	1.0%	2.9%	12.5%	28.7%	54.9%	4.33	0.88	1633	40	33
Class sizes are too large to meet the individual student's needs	40.3%	21.3%	17.6%	11.7%	9.2%	2.28	1.34	1652	16	38
Teachers are disenchanted with what can be accomplished at this school	22.3%	22.0%	31.6%	15.1%	9.0%	2.66	1.23	1514	142	50
The school provides appropriate special education services for students who require it	8.9%	13.8%	26.4%	24.7%	26.2%	3.45	1.26	1602	76	28





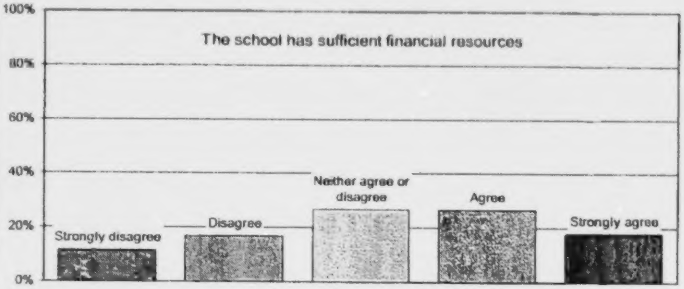


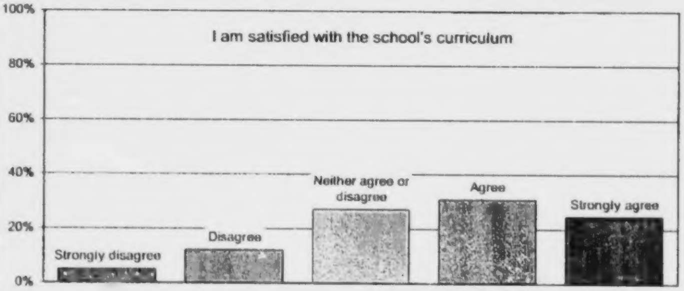


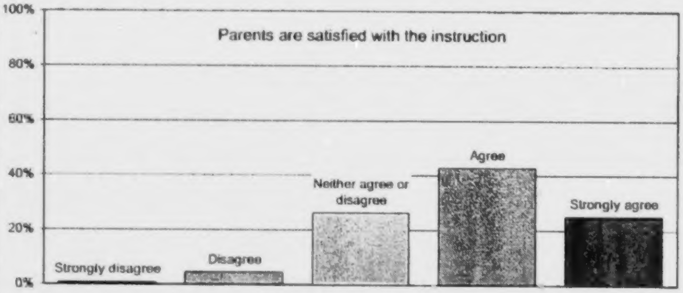


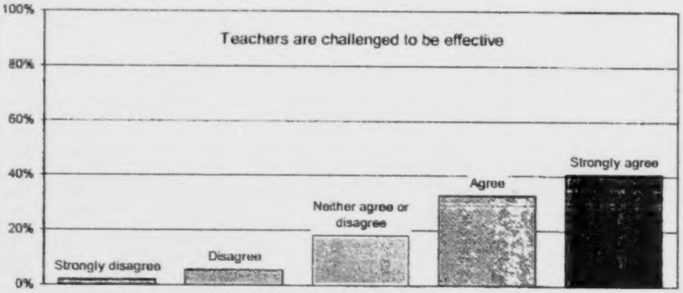
19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

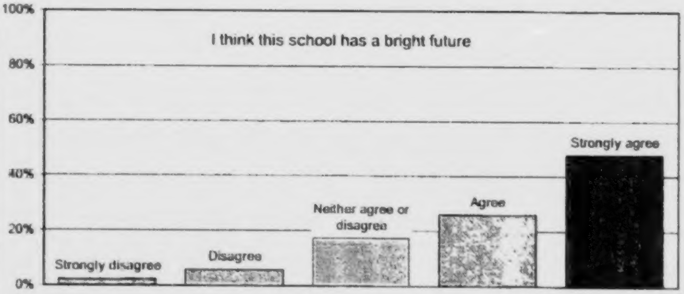
	Strongly disagree	←		→	Strongly agree	Mean	STD	N	Don't know	Mis-sing
	1	2	3	4	5					
The school has sufficient financial resources	11.6%	16.9%	26.8%	26.8%	18.0%	3.23	1.25	1375	296	35
I am satisfied with the school's curriculum	5.0%	12.1%	27.2%	30.9%	24.7%	3.58	1.13	1614	56	36
Parents are satisfied with the instruction	0.9%	4.5%	26.3%	42.9%	25.4%	3.87	0.87	1428	236	42
Teachers are challenged to be effective	2.1%	5.7%	18.3%	32.9%	40.9%	4.05	1.00	1635	35	36
I think this school has a bright future	2.4%	5.9%	17.5%	26.2%	48.0%	4.11	1.05	1620	49	37





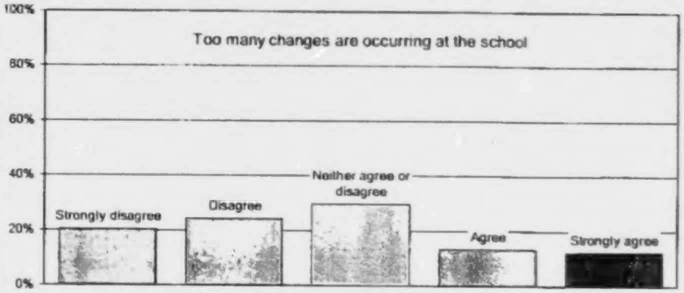


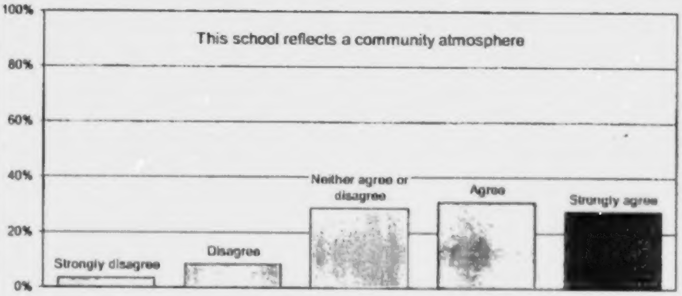


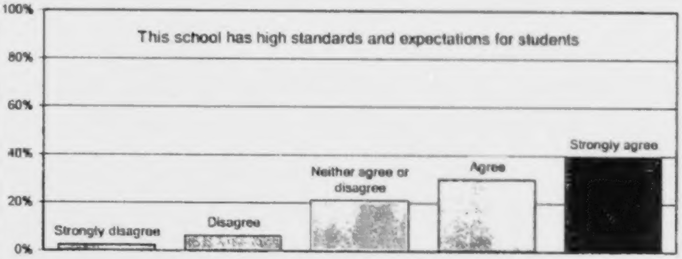


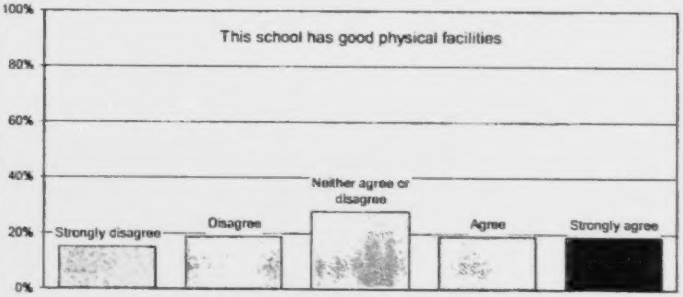
19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

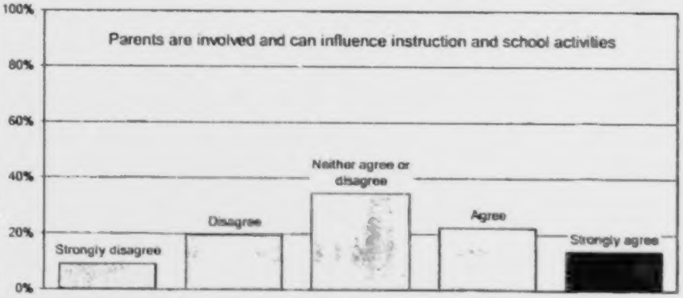
	Strongly disagree 1	← 2	3	→ 4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	N	Don't know	Missing
Too many changes are occurring at the school	20.4%	24.4%	29.7%	13.3%	12.3%	2.73	1.27	1621	52	33
This school reflects a community atmosphere	3.5%	8.6%	28.9%	31.2%	27.8%	3.71	1.07	1607	58	41
This school has high standards and expectations for students	2.5%	6.5%	21.1%	30.1%	39.8%	3.98	1.05	1656	12	38
This school has good physical facilities	15.1%	18.9%	27.9%	19.1%	18.9%	3.08	1.32	1647	21	38
Parents are involved and can influence instruction and school activities	9.2%	19.8%	34.6%	22.5%	13.9%	3.12	1.16	1599	69	38





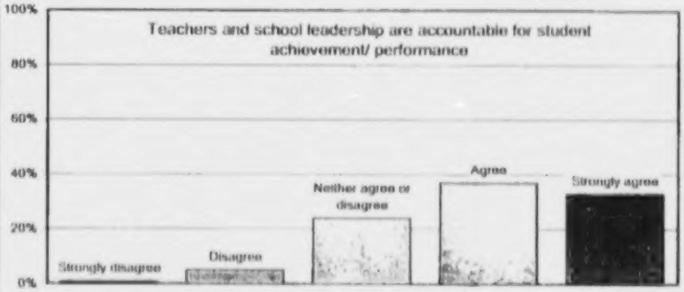


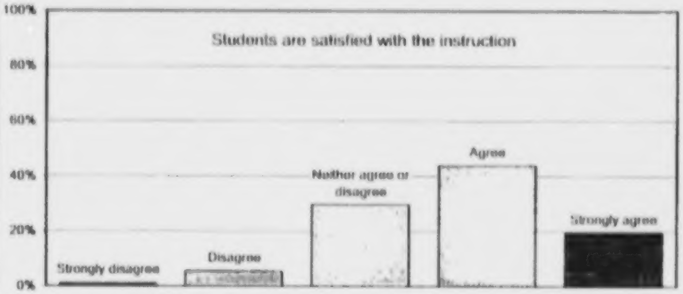


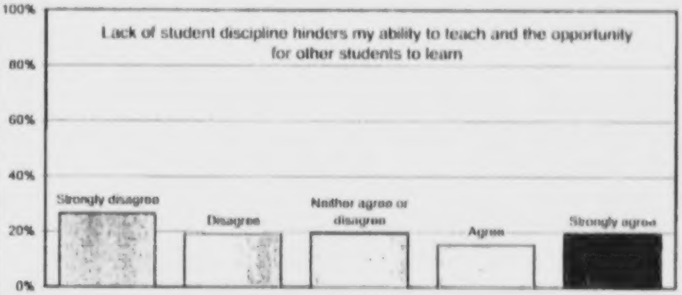


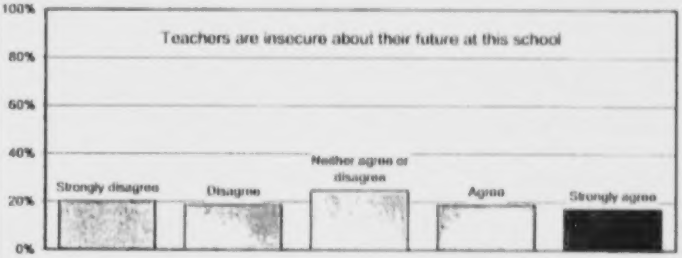
19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

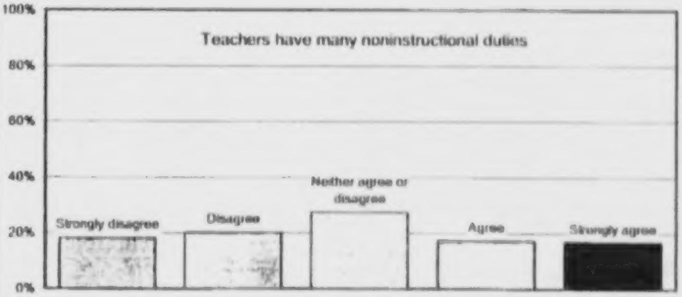
	Strongly disagree	←	→		Strongly agree	Mean	STD	N	Don't know	Missing
	1	2	3	4	5					
Teachers and school leadership are accountable for student achievement/ performance	0.9%	5.1%	24.0%	37.0%	33.0%	3.96	0.93	1624	48	34
Students are satisfied with the instruction	1.2%	5.5%	29.6%	44.0%	19.6%	3.75	0.87	1481	164	61
Lack of student discipline hinders my ability to teach and the opportunity for other students to learn	26.6%	19.1%	19.4%	15.5%	19.3%	2.82	1.47	1589	69	48
Teachers are insecure about their future at this school	20.2%	18.8%	24.7%	18.9%	17.3%	2.94	1.37	1521	150	35
Teachers have many noninstructional duties	18.2%	20.2%	27.5%	17.3%	16.8%	2.94	1.33	1569	97	40











Totals for All Pennsylvania Charter School Students

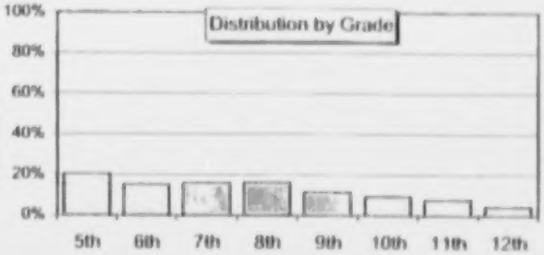
2001-02 WMU Charter School Survey

Informant Group: **Students (N=2,519)**

Descriptive Statistics

1. In what grade are you this year?

	Grade level									
	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Total	Missing
N	514	379	395	405	289	235	193	109	2519	0
%	20.4%	15.0%	15.7%	16.1%	11.5%	9.3%	7.7%	4.3%	100.0%	



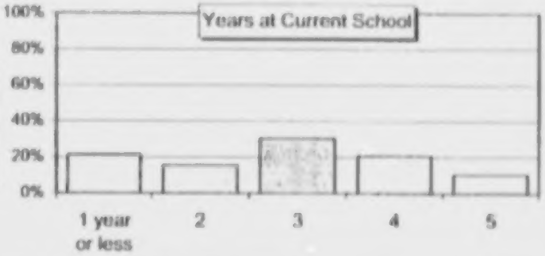
2. How old are you?

Mean	13.25
STD	2.19
Missing	1

	Years												
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Total
N	6	214	410	415	427	349	255	222	127	65	17	11	2518
%	0.2%	8.5%	16.3%	16.5%	17.0%	13.9%	10.1%	8.8%	5.0%	2.6%	0.7%	0.4%	100.0%

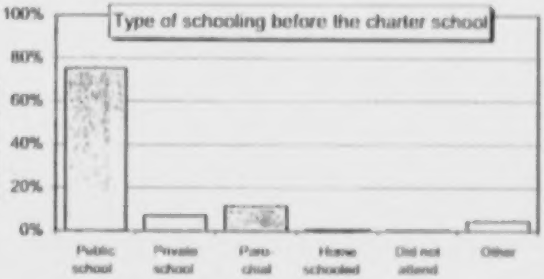
3. How many years, including this year, have you attended this school?

	Years at current school							
	1 year or less	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Missing
N	526	382	755	515	258	40	2476	43
%	21.2%	15.4%	30.5%	20.8%	10.4%	1.6%	100.0%	



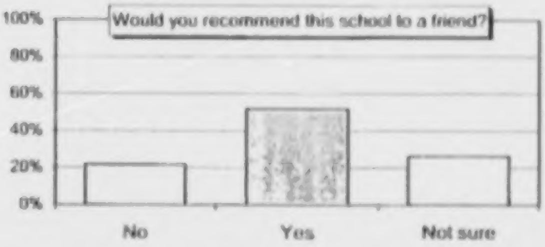
4. What kind of school did you attend before enrolling in this school?

	Public school	Private school	Parochial	Home schooled	Did not attend	Other	Total	Missing
N	1859	175	285	23	11	111	2464	55
%	75.4%	7.1%	11.6%	0.9%	0.4%	4.5%	100.0%	



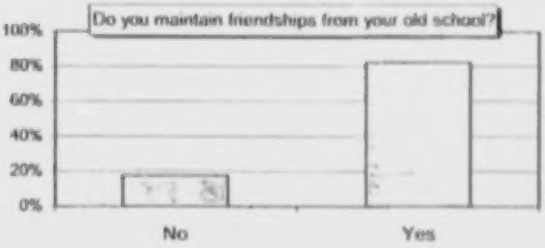
5. Would you recommend to a friend that he/she enroll in this school?

	No	Yes	Not sure	Total	Missing
N	542	1295	654	2491	28
%	21.8%	52.0%	26.3%	100.0%	



6. Do you maintain friendships with students from your old school?

	No	Yes	Total	Missing
N	430	2013	2443	76
%	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%	



7. How did you do in your previous school? (Self-rated)

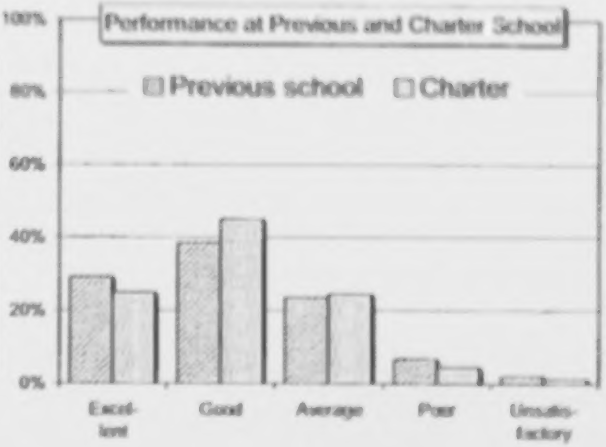
Mean	2.14
STD	0.98
Missing	67

	Excel-lent 1	Good 2	Average 3	Poor 4	Unsatis-factory 5	Total
N	714	946	576	166	50	2452
%	29.1%	38.6%	23.5%	6.8%	2.0%	100.0%

8. How are you doing so far in this school? (Self-rated)

Mean	2.12
STD	0.87
Missing	54

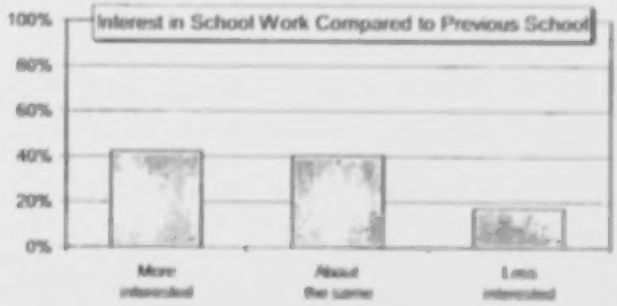
	Excel-lent 1	Good 2	Average 3	Poor 4	Unsatis-factory 5	Total
N	615	1108	602	111	29	2465
%	24.9%	44.9%	24.4%	4.5%	1.2%	100.0%



9. Compared to your previous school, how interested are you in your school work?

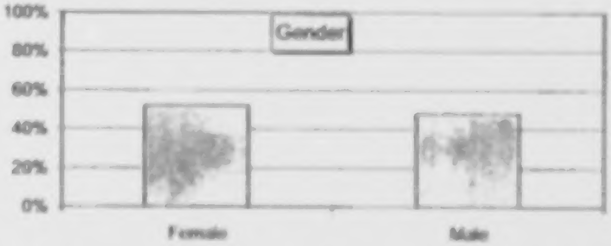
Mean	1.75
STD	0.73
Missing	79

	More interested 1	About the same 2	Less interested 3	Total
N	1031	986	423	2440
%	42.3%	40.4%	17.3%	100.0%



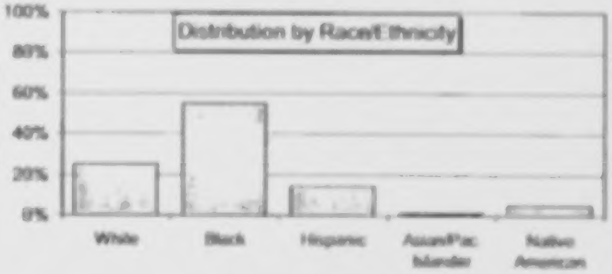
10. What is your gender?

	Female	Male	Total	Missing
N	1255	1163	2418	101
%	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%	



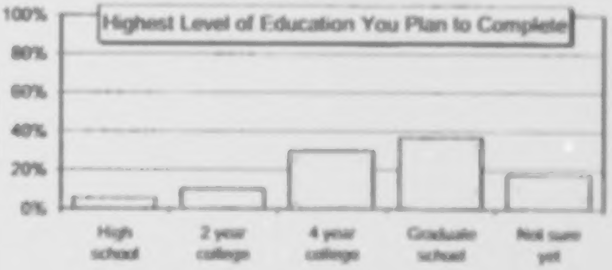
11. What is your race/ethnicity?

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pac Islander	Native American	Total	Missing
N	595	1304	334	28	114	2375	144
%	25.1%	54.9%	14.1%	1.2%	4.8%	100.0%	



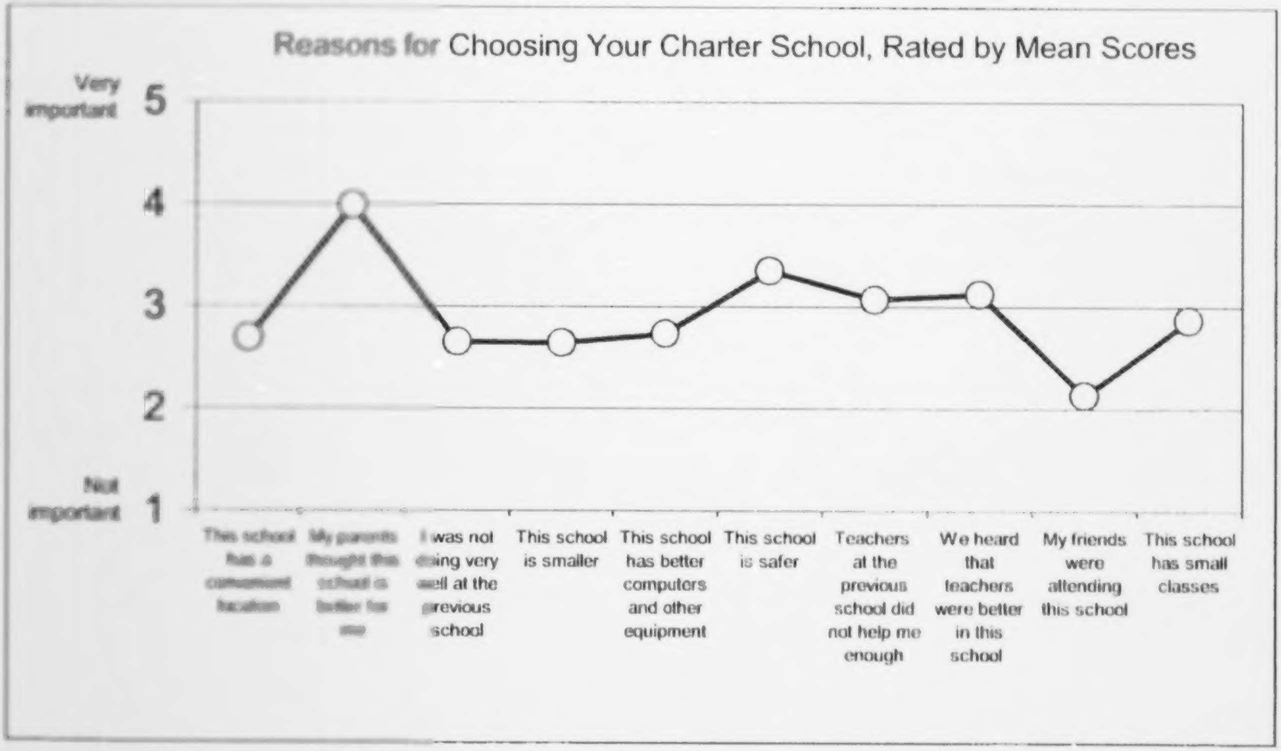
12. Highest level of education you plan to complete?

	High school	2 year college	4 year college	Graduate school	Not sure yet	Total	Missing
N	129	247	726	897	427	2426	93
%	5.3%	10.2%	29.9%	37.0%	17.6%	100.0%	



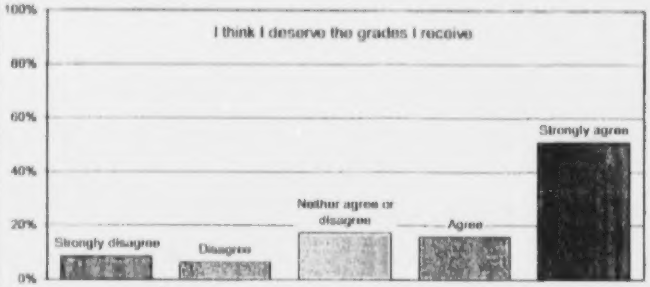
Why did you and your family choose this school?

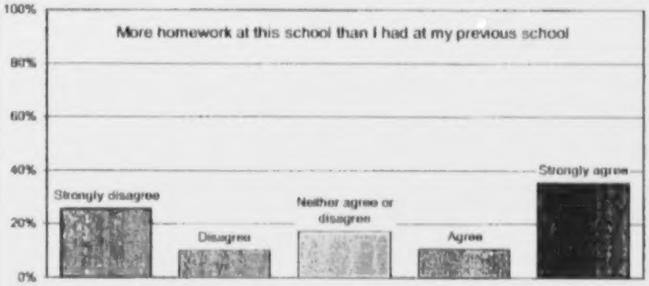
	Percentages									
	Not important 1	2	3	4	Very important 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Missing
This school has a convenient location	34.1%	11.9%	24.4%	10.2%	19.3%	2.69	1.50	3.0	2303	216
My parents thought this school is better for me	10.4%	4.8%	14.2%	17.0%	53.6%	3.99	1.34	5.0	2301	218
I was not doing very well at the previous school	40.4%	9.4%	17.3%	10.5%	22.4%	2.65	1.61	3.0	2289	230
This school is smaller	43.2%	9.1%	12.8%	10.3%	24.5%	2.64	1.67	2.0	2276	243
This school has better computers and other equipment	36.9%	11.7%	16.5%	10.8%	24.0%	2.73	1.61	3.0	2279	240
This school is safer	21.8%	9.1%	17.3%	16.1%	35.8%	3.35	1.56	4.0	2284	235
Teachers at the previous school did not help me enough	29.4%	9.6%	16.7%	13.7%	30.6%	3.07	1.62	3.0	2271	248
We heard that teachers were better in this school	26.5%	9.5%	19.0%	16.0%	29.1%	3.12	1.57	3.0	2281	238
My friends were attending this school	54.8%	11.6%	12.9%	7.2%	13.4%	2.13	1.47	1.0	2280	239
This school has small classes	34.9%	9.9%	15.9%	11.5%	27.7%	2.87	1.64	3.0	2292	227

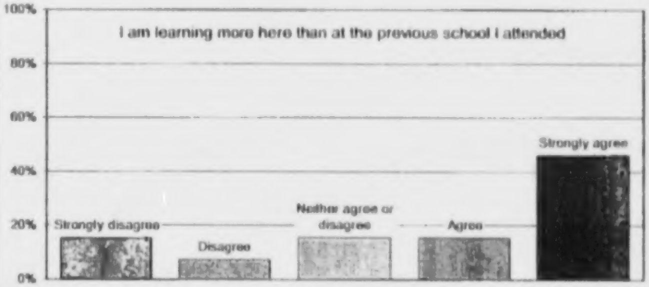

Reasons for Choosing Your Charter School, Rated by Mean Scores

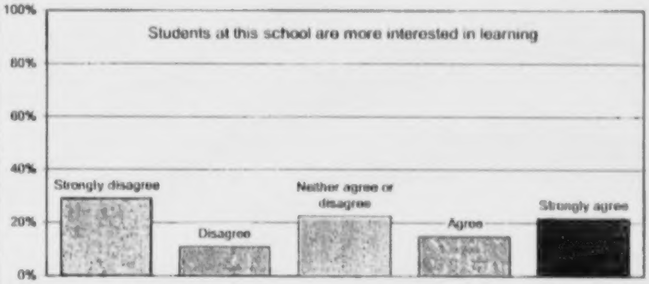
16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

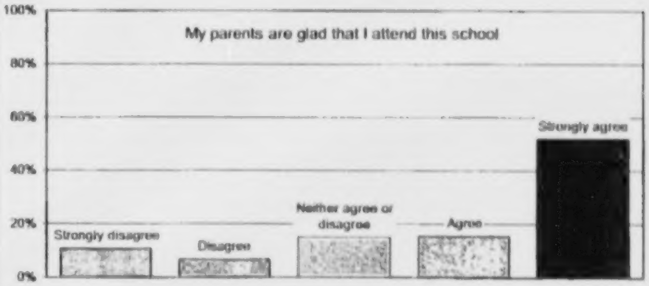
	Strongly disagree 1	← 2	3	4 →	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Missing
I think I deserve the grades I receive	8.8%	6.5%	17.5%	16.0%	51.2%	3.94	1.32	5.0	2357	131	31
I have more homework at this school than I had at my previous school	25.8%	10.3%	17.5%	10.8%	35.7%	3.20	1.62	3.0	2383	93	43
I think that I am learning more here than at the previous school I attended	15.3%	7.4%	15.5%	15.6%	46.1%	3.70	1.48	4.0	2373	89	57
Students at this school are more interested in learning than they were at my last school	29.3%	11.1%	22.5%	15.1%	22.0%	2.90	1.52	3.0	2256	208	55
My parents are glad that I attend this school	10.8%	6.6%	15.0%	15.6%	52.0%	3.91	1.38	5.0	2318	163	38





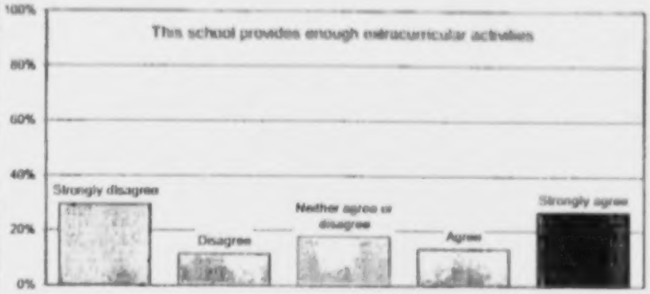


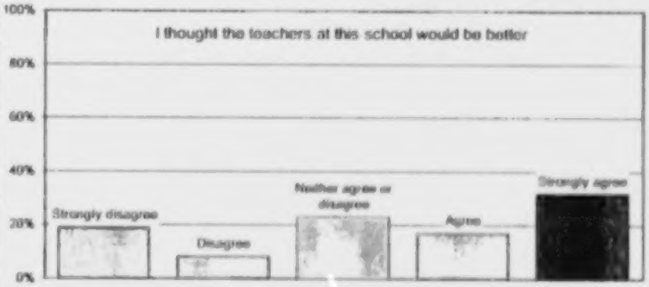


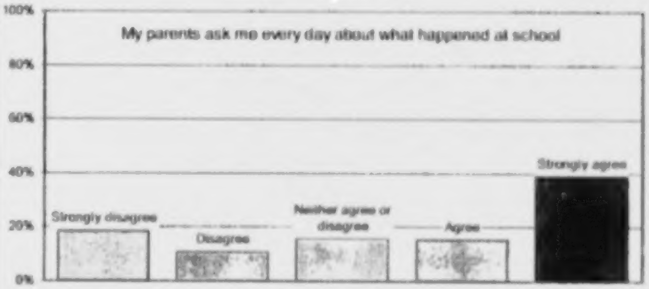


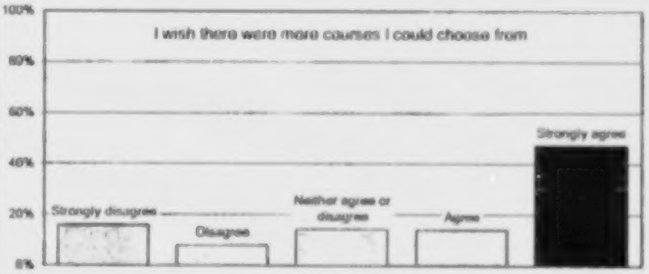
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

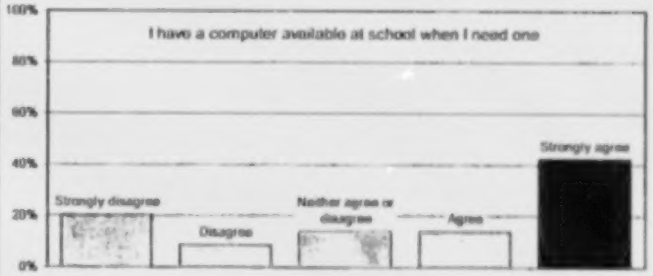
	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Missing
This school provides enough extracurricular activities for me	29.8%	11.8%	17.8%	13.6%	27.0%	2.96	1.59	3.0	2326	131	62
I thought the teachers at this school would be better	19.1%	8.5%	23.1%	17.3%	32.0%	3.35	1.48	3.0	2264	183	72
My parents ask me every day about what happened at school	18.6%	10.9%	15.8%	15.6%	39.2%	3.46	1.54	4.0	2436	39	44
I wish there were more courses I could choose from	16.1%	8.1%	14.4%	14.1%	47.4%	3.69	1.51	4.0	2379	87	53
I have a computer available at school when I need one	20.4%	8.8%	14.2%	14.2%	42.5%	3.50	1.58	4.0	2426	60	33





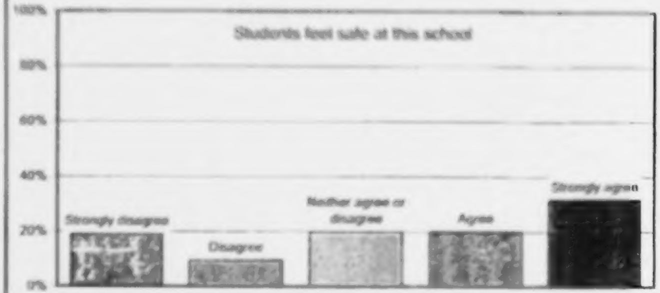


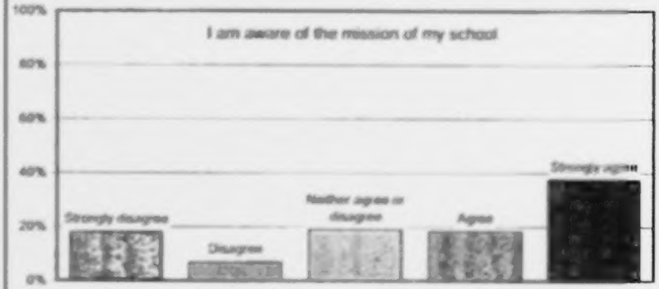


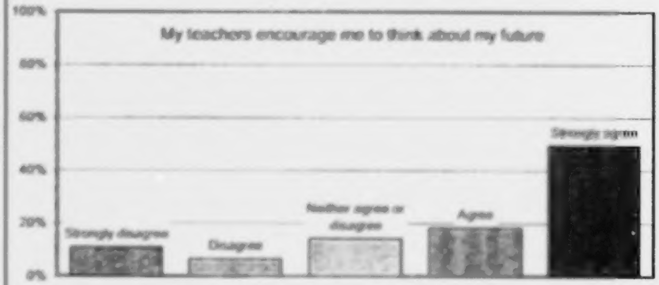


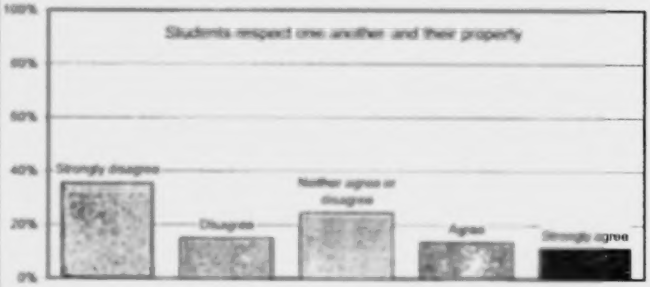
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

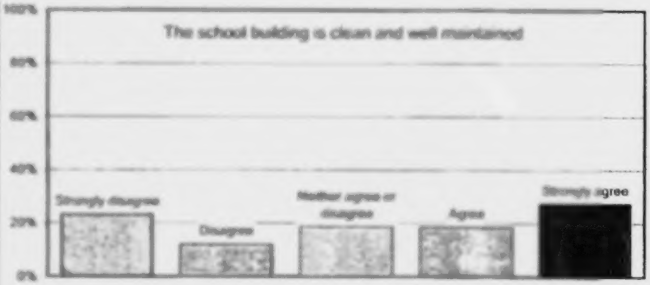
	Strongly disagree 1	← 2	3	→ 4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Missing
Students feel safe at this school	19.0%	9.4%	19.9%	20.0%	31.7%	3.36	1.48	4.0	2165	305	49
I am aware of the mission of my school	18.0%	6.9%	19.0%	18.4%	37.6%	3.51	1.49	4.0	2279	178	62
My teachers encourage me to think about my future	11.0%	6.6%	14.3%	18.5%	49.5%	3.89	1.37	4.0	2394	86	39
Students respect one another and their property	35.6%	15.0%	24.5%	13.5%	11.4%	2.50	1.38	2.0	2377	94	48
The school building is clean and well maintained	23.3%	12.0%	18.7%	18.7%	27.4%	3.15	1.52	3.0	2402	75	42





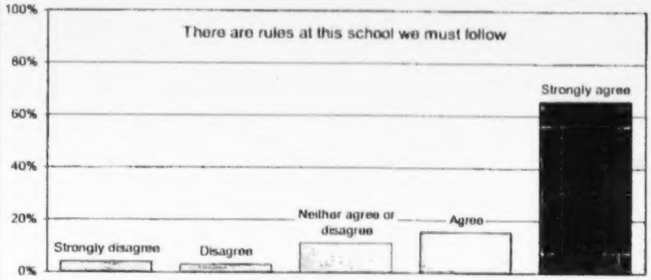


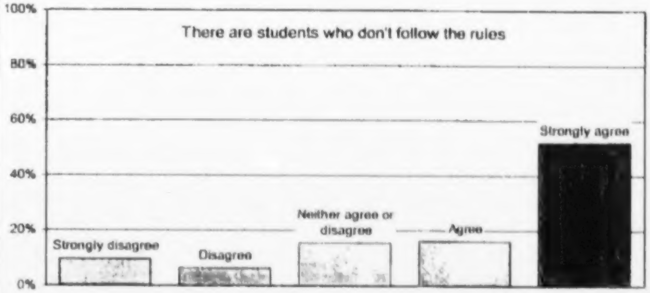


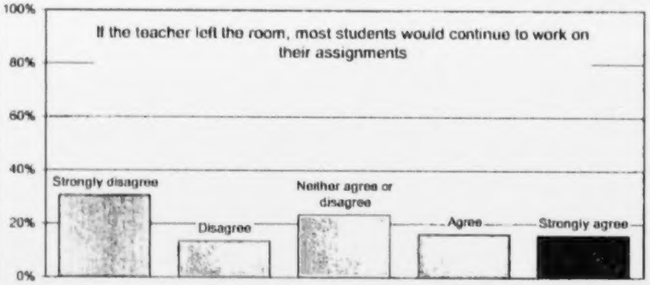


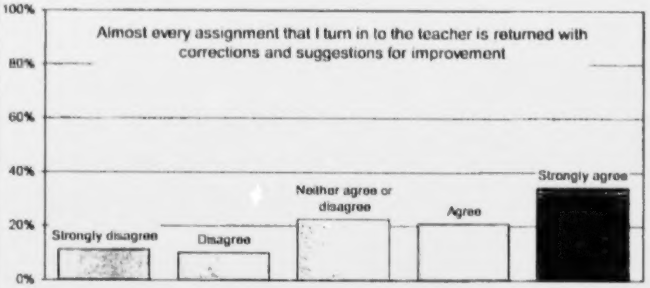
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

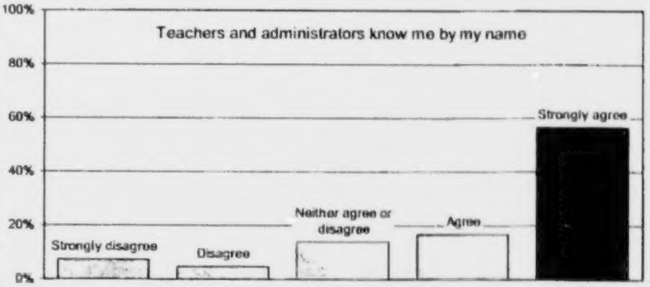
	Strongly disagree 1	← 2	3	→ 4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Missing
There are rules at this school we must follow	4.1%	3.2%	11.3%	15.7%	65.8%	4.36	1.07	5.0	2334	33	152
There are students who don't follow the rules	9.8%	6.4%	15.5%	16.3%	52.1%	3.95	1.34	5.0	2274	74	171
If the teacher left the room, most students would continue to work on their assignments	30.8%	13.6%	23.6%	16.2%	15.8%	2.73	1.45	3.0	2402	83	34
Almost every assignment that I turn in to the teacher is returned with corrections and suggestions for improvement	11.4%	10.3%	22.7%	21.1%	34.5%	3.57	1.35	4.0	2383	86	50
Teachers and administrators at this school know me by my name	7.5%	4.8%	14.0%	16.9%	56.8%	4.11	1.25	5.0	2335	98	86





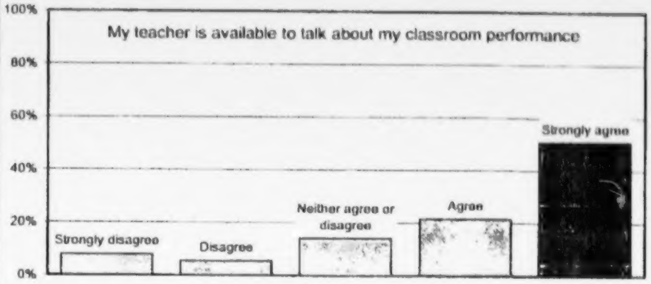


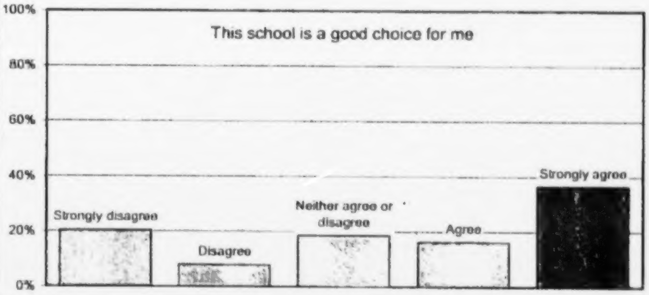


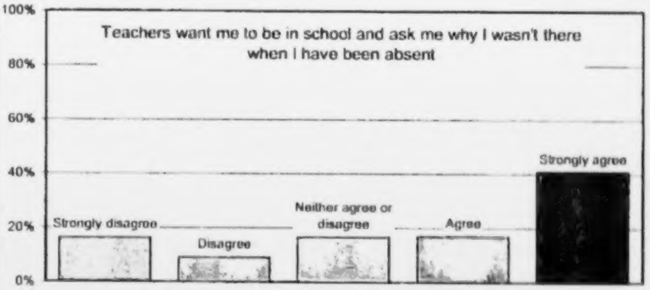


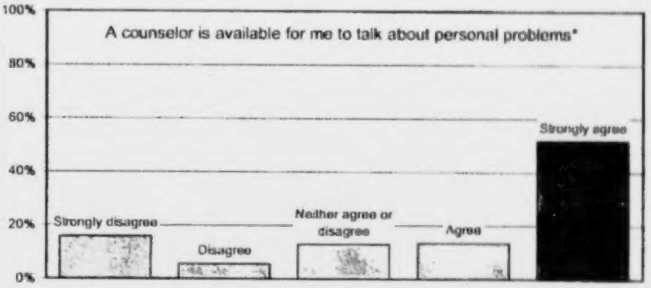
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

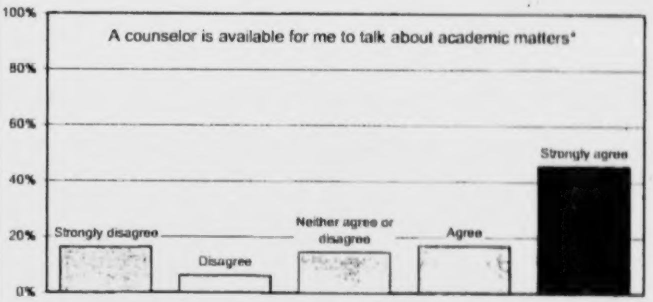
	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Missing
My teacher is available to talk about my classroom performance, (i.e., course work, homework, grades, etc.)	8.1%	5.6%	14.0%	21.6%	50.8%	4.01	1.26	5.0	2378	95	46
This school is a good choice for me	20.5%	8.0%	18.6%	16.3%	36.6%	3.40	1.54	4.0	2356	103	60
Teachers want me to be in school and ask me why I wasn't there when I have been absent	16.4%	9.0%	16.6%	17.0%	40.9%	3.57	1.49	4.0	2325	134	60
A counselor is available for me to talk about personal problems*	16.0%	5.7%	13.0%	13.6%	51.7%	3.79	1.51	5.0	1688	180	651
A counselor is available for me to talk about academic matters*	16.4%	6.3%	14.6%	17.0%	45.6%	3.69	1.50	4.0	1625	225	669











* The last two items were only to be answered by those middle and high school students who have access to counselors

Totals for All Pennsylvania Charter School Parents, 2001-02

2001-02 WMU Charter School Survey
Descriptive Statistics

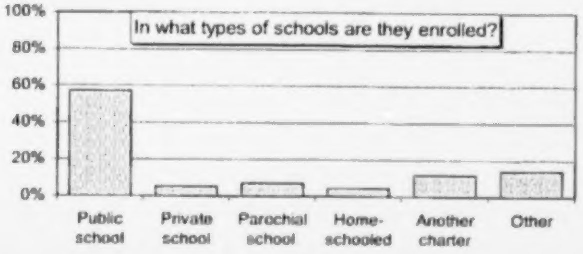
Informant Group: **Parents/Guardians (N=863)**

1. In what grades do you have children enrolled in this charter school?

	Grade level													
	K	*1st*	*2nd*	*3rd*	*4th*	*5th*	*6th*	*7th*	*8th*	*9th*	*10th*	*11th*	*12th*	Total
Total number	175	124	123	130	100	79	94	85	81	89	65	45	38	1228
Total percent	14.3%	10.1%	10.0%	10.6%	8.1%	6.4%	7.7%	6.9%	6.6%	7.2%	5.3%	3.7%	3.1%	100%

2. If you have other children attending another K-12 school, in what type of school are they enrolled?

	Public school	Private school	Parochial school	Home-schooled	Another charter	Other	Total	Missing
N	208	19	26	16	43	51	363	500
%	57.3%	5.2%	7.2%	4.4%	11.8%	14.0%	100%	



3. Approximately how many miles do you live from this charter school?

Mean	5.65
STD	3.90
Missing	40

	Miles											
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*>10*	Total
N	167	91	76	54	68	44	29	40	12	40	202	823
%	20.3%	11.1%	9.2%	6.6%	8.3%	5.3%	3.5%	4.9%	1.5%	4.9%	24.5%	100%

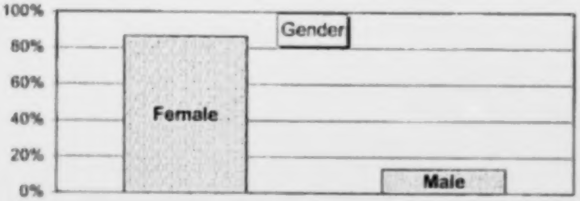
4. Approximately how many miles do you live from the nearest traditional public school where your child could be enrolled?

Mean	2.38
STD	2.43
Missing	28

	Miles											
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*>10*	Total
N	498	110	62	38	41	25	10	10	5	11	25	835
%	59.6%	13.2%	7.4%	4.6%	4.9%	3.0%	1.2%	1.2%	0.6%	1.3%	3.0%	100%

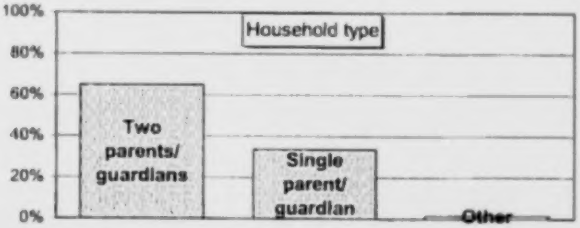
5. What is your gender?

	Female	Male	Total	Missing
N	739	115	854	9
%	86.5%	13.5%	100%	



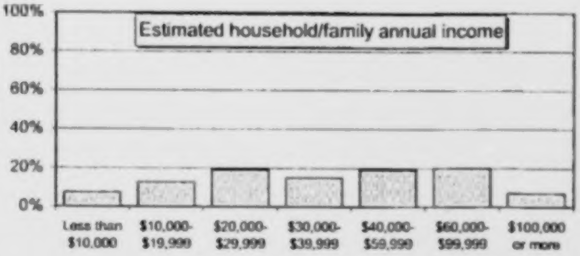
6. Which best describes your household?

	Two parents/ guardians	Single parent/ guardian	Other	Total	Missing
N	554	287	12	853	10
%	64.9%	33.6%	1.4%	100%	



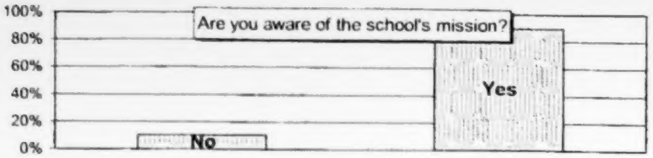
7. What is the estimated annual income of your household/family?

	Less than $10,000	$10,000-$19,999	$20,000-$29,999	$30,000-$39,999	$40,000-$59,999	$60,000-$99,999	$100,000 or more	Total	Missing
N	61	107	160	127	160	169	59	843	20
%	7.2%	12.7%	19.0%	15.1%	19.0%	20.0%	7.0%	100%	



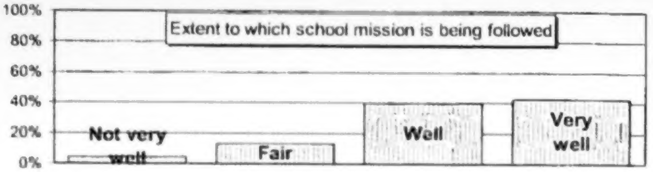
8a. Are you aware of the school's mission?

	No	Yes	Total	Missing
N	87	767	854	9
%	10.2%	89.8%	100%	



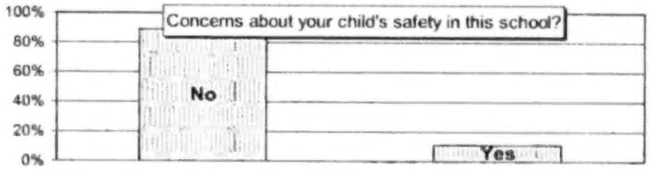
8b. If yes, to what extent is the mission being followed by the school?

	Not very well 1	Fair 2	Well 3	Very well 4	Total	Missing
N	33	100	302	324	759	104
%	4.3%	13.2%	39.8%	42.7%	100%	



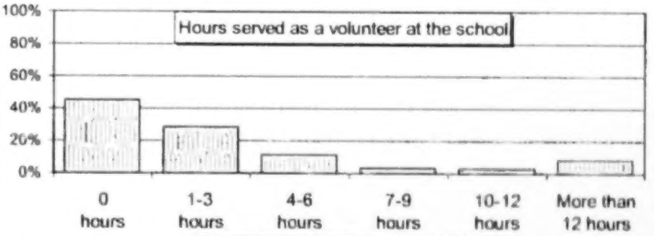
9. Do you have concerns about your child's safety in this school?

	No	Yes	Total	Missing
N	754	94	848	15
%	88.9%	11.1%	100%	



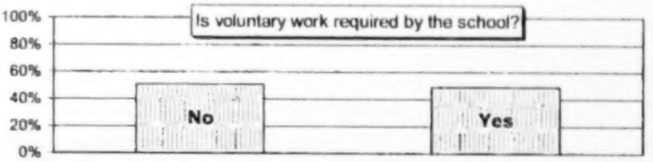
10a. Estimate the total number of hours that you and other adults in your household have served as a volunteer at the school during an average month?

	0 hours	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	10-12 hours	More than 12 hours	Total	Missing
N	377	238	96	27	26	70	834	29
%	45.2%	28.5%	11.5%	3.2%	3.1%	8.4%	100%	



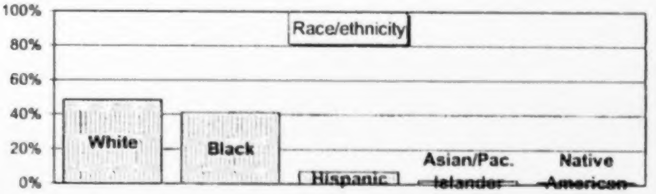
10b. Is voluntary work required by the school?

	No	Yes	Total	Missing
N	373	359	732	131
%	51.0%	49.0%	100%	



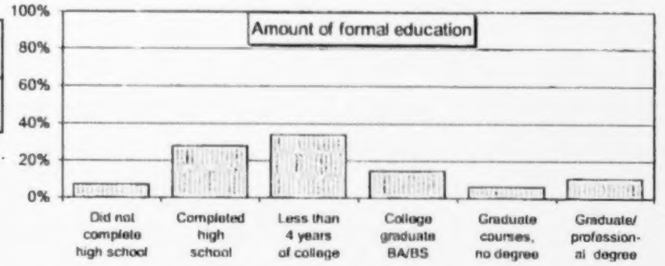
11. What is your race/ethnicity?

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pac. Islander	Native American	Total	Missing
N	398	340	58	17	11	824	39
%	48.3%	41.3%	7.0%	2.1%	1.3%	100%	



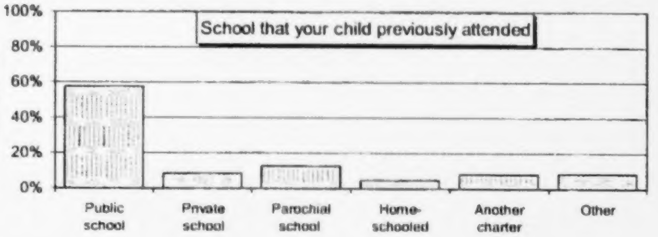
12. How much formal education have you had?

	Did not complete high school	Completed high school	Less than 4 years of college	College graduate BA/BS	Graduate courses, no degree	Graduate/ professional degree	Total	Missing
N	60	229	282	120	52	88	831	32
%	7.2%	27.6%	33.9%	14.4%	6.3%	10.6%	100%	



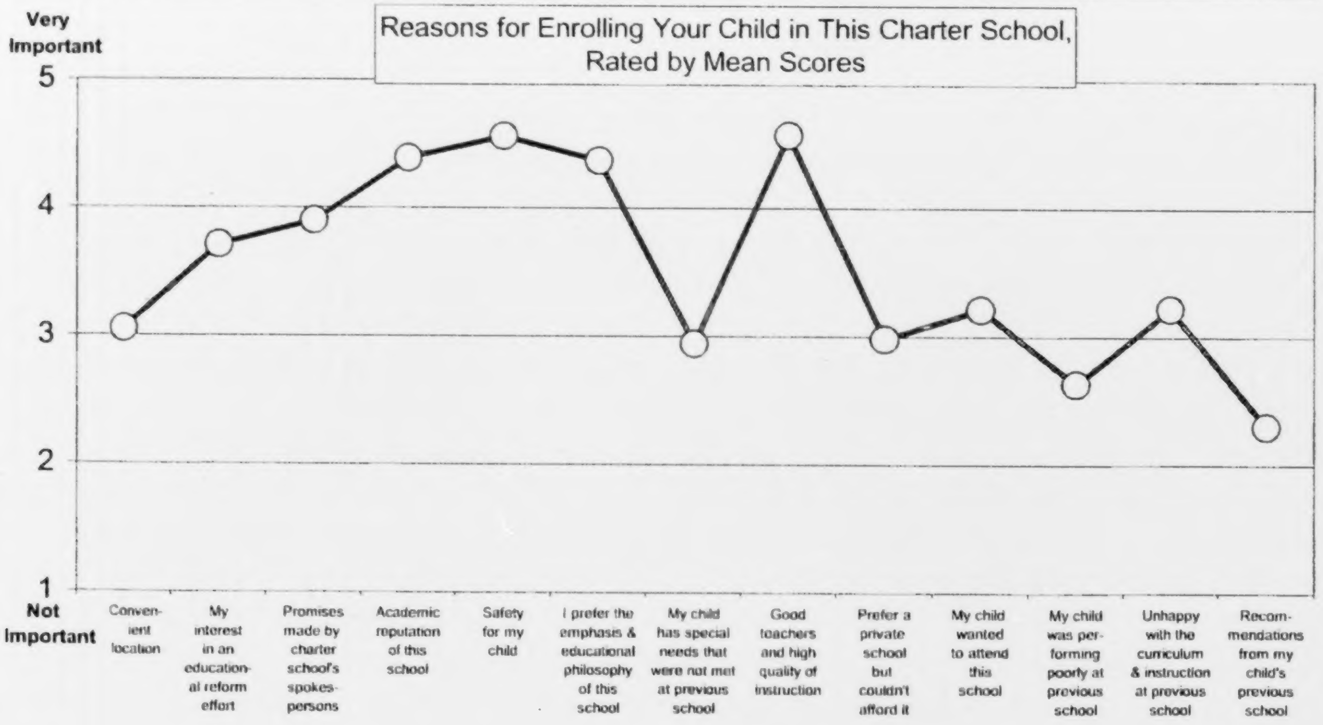
13. What kind of school did your child previously attend before this charter school?

	Public school	Private school	Parochial school	Home-schooled	Another charter	Other	Total	Missing
N	469	68	103	39	67	68	814	49
%	57.6%	8.4%	12.7%	4.8%	8.2%	8.4%	100%	



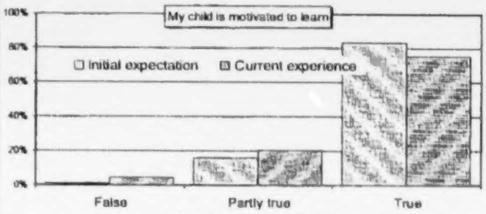
14. Rate the importance of the following factors in your decision to enroll your child in this school.

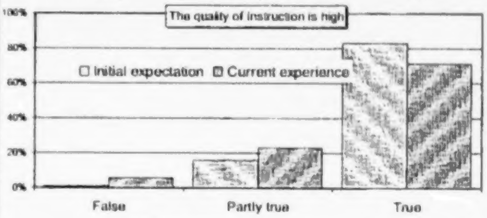
	Percentages Not important 1	2	3	4	Very important 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Mis-sing
a. Convenient location	25.1%	11.1%	24.6%	11.9%	27.3%	3.1	1.52	3	840	23
b. My interest in an educational reform effort	7.8%	8.6%	24.4%	23.5%	35.7%	3.7	1.25	4	829	34
c. Promises made by charter school's spokespersons	7.8%	5.8%	17.2%	26.6%	42.6%	3.9	1.24	4	831	32
d. Academic reputation (high standards) of this school	1.8%	2.2%	11.5%	24.5%	60.0%	4.4	0.90	5	824	39
e. Safety for my child	2.6%	1.8%	6.9%	14.0%	74.6%	4.6	0.90	5	836	27
f. I prefer the emphasis and educational philosophy of this school	2.3%	1.7%	11.3%	26.3%	58.4%	4.4	0.92	5	825	38
g. My child has special needs that were not met at previous school	36.6%	7.6%	12.3%	12.2%	31.2%	2.9	1.71	3	794	69
h. Good teachers and high quality of instruction	1.6%	1.0%	8.8%	16.0%	72.7%	4.6	0.82	5	821	42
i. I prefer a private school but could not afford it	31.1%	9.8%	18.6%	10.9%	29.7%	3.0	1.62	3	818	45
j. My child wanted to attend this school	22.6%	7.5%	24.7%	16.5%	28.7%	3.2	1.50	3	813	50
k. My child was performing poorly at previous school	43.0%	7.3%	16.3%	10.4%	23.0%	2.6	1.64	2	781	82
l. I was unhappy with the curriculum & instruction at previous school	28.5%	5.1%	17.9%	12.8%	35.7%	3.2	1.64	3	792	71
m. Recommendations of teacher/official at my child's previous school	50.9%	9.5%	15.3%	7.8%	16.5%	2.3	1.54	1	786	77

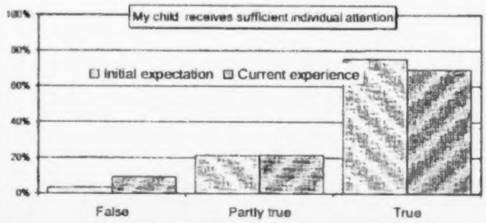

Reasons for Enrolling Your Child in This Charter School, Rated by Mean Scores

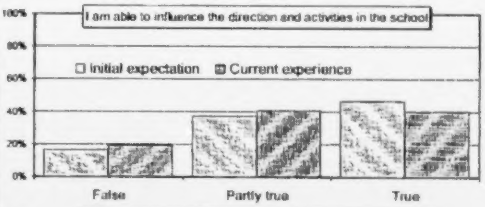
15. Rate each of the following statements as to what you expected when you first enrolled your child at this school (initial expectation) and how you would rate it today (current experience).

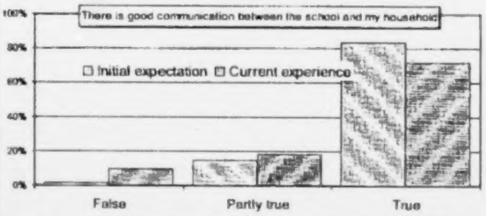
	Initial Expectation							Current Experience						
	False 1	Partly True 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing	False 1	Partly true 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing
My child will be/ *is* motivated to learn	0.8%	15.8%	83.3%	2.82	0.40	3	67	4.3%	20.4%	75.3%	2.71	0.54	3	67
The quality of instruction will be/ *is* high	1.0%	16.0%	83.0%	2.82	0.41	15	82	5.6%	23.0%	71.4%	2.66	0.58	15	82
My child will receive/ *receives* sufficient individual attention	3.3%	21.2%	75.5%	2.72	0.52	12	79	9.2%	21.4%	69.4%	2.60	0.65	12	79
I will be/ *am* able to influence the direction and activities in the school	16.4%	37.0%	46.6%	2.30	0.73	97	75	19.2%	40.5%	40.2%	2.21	0.74	97	75
There will be/ *is* good communication between the school and my household	1.7%	14.7%	83.5%	2.82	0.43	3	74	9.5%	18.4%	72.0%	2.62	0.65	3	74
My child will have/ *has* access to computers and other new technologies	1.6%	13.7%	84.7%	2.83	0.42	13	71	4.2%	15.8%	80.0%	2.76	0.52	13	71
The school will have/ *has* effective leadership and administration	1.5%	15.2%	83.2%	2.82	0.42	25	76	9.2%	21.3%	69.6%	2.60	0.65	25	76

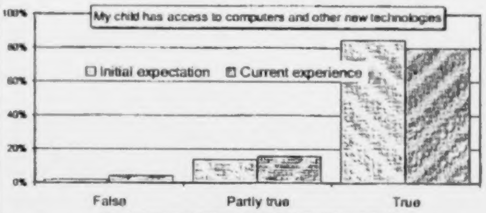


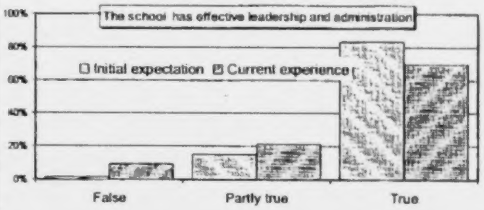






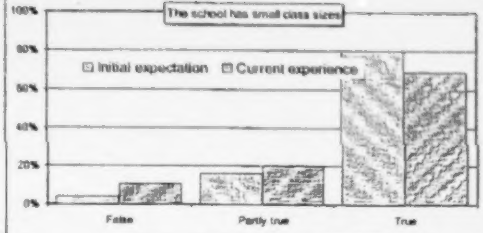


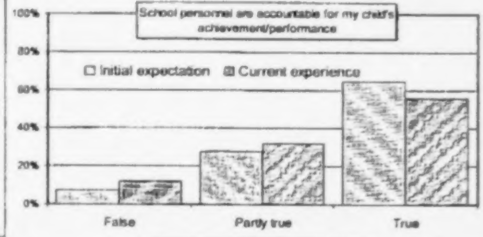


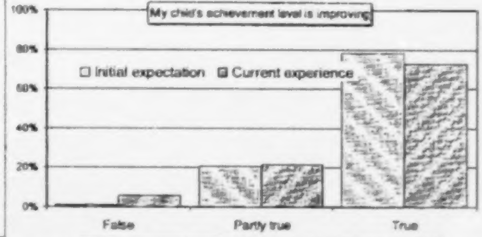


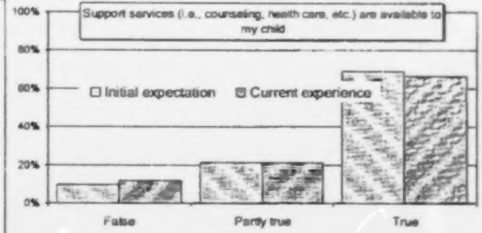
Rate each of the following statements as to what you expected when you first enrolled your child at this school (initial expectation) and how you would rate it today (current experience).

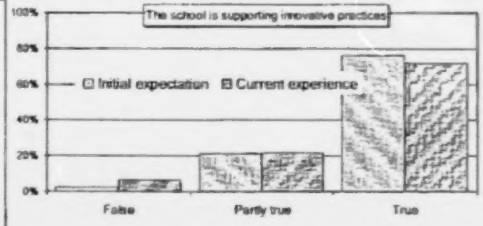
	Initial Expectation							Current Experience						
	False 1	Partly True 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing	False 1	Partly true 2	True 3	Mean	STD	Don't know	Missing
The school will have/ *has* small class sizes	3.8%	16.0%	80.2%	2.76	0.51	22	78	10.6%	20.3%	69.1%	2.58	0.68	22	78
School personnel will be/ *are* accountable for my child's achievement/ performance	7.5%	27.9%	64.7%	2.57	0.63	45	84	12.0%	32.2%	55.9%	2.44	0.70	45	84
My child's achievement level will improve/ *is* improving	1.1%	20.6%	78.3%	2.77	0.45	14	84	5.8%	21.4%	72.8%	2.67	0.58	14	84
Support services (i.e., counseling, health care, etc.) will be/ *are* available to my child	9.4%	21.4%	69.3%	2.60	0.65	73	78	11.9%	21.3%	66.7%	2.55	0.70	73	78
The school will support/ *is supporting* innovative practices	2.5%	21.2%	76.3%	2.74	0.49	114	88	6.4%	21.6%	72.0%	2.66	0.59	114	88
I will be/ *am* able to influence instruction and school activities	14.0%	36.8%	49.3%	2.35	0.71	114	77	20.7%	37.8%	41.5%	2.21	0.78	114	77

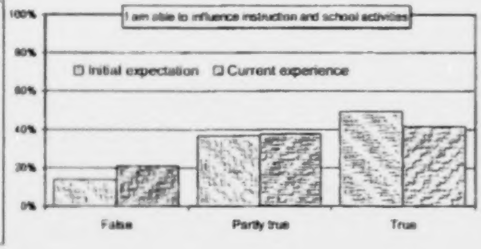






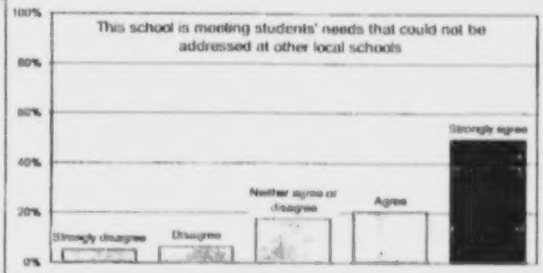


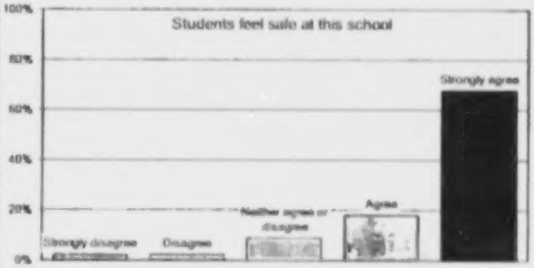


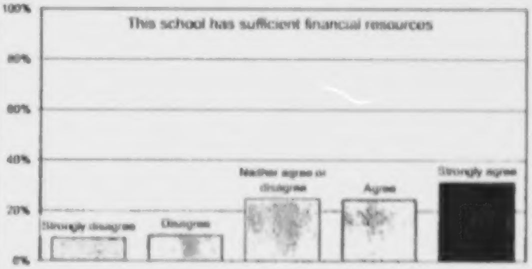


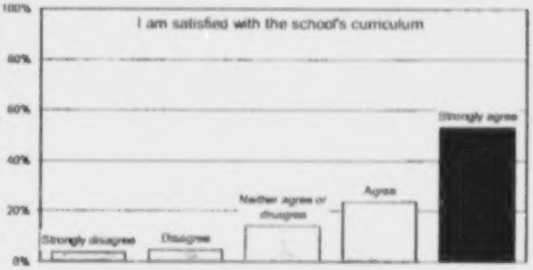
16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

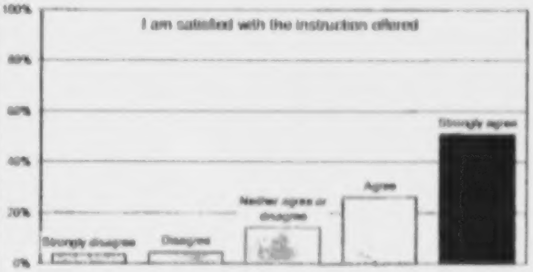
	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Mis-sing
This school is meeting students' needs that could not be addressed at other local schools	5.4%	6.6%	17.6%	20.6%	49.8%	4.03	1.19	4.0	757	82	24
Students feel safe at this school	2.5%	2.4%	9.0%	18.2%	67.9%	4.47	0.93	5.0	807	34	22
This school has sufficient financial resources	9.1%	10.2%	24.8%	24.4%	31.5%	3.59	1.27	4.0	581	247	35
I am satisfied with the school's curriculum	3.9%	4.8%	14.2%	23.8%	53.3%	4.18	1.09	5.0	839	4	20
I am satisfied with the instruction offered	3.8%	4.7%	14.2%	26.3%	51.0%	4.16	1.08	5.0	822	11	30





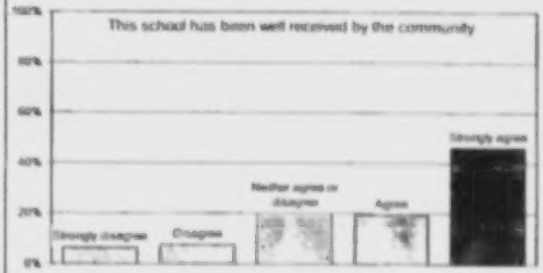


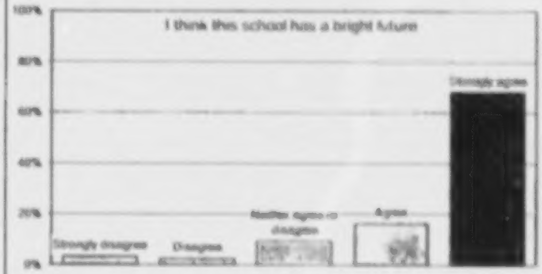


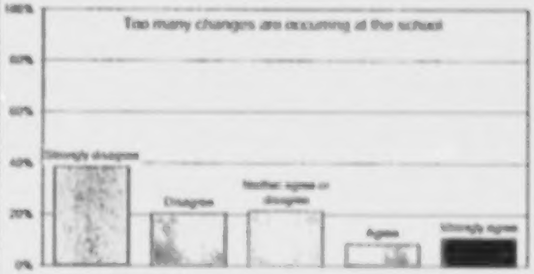


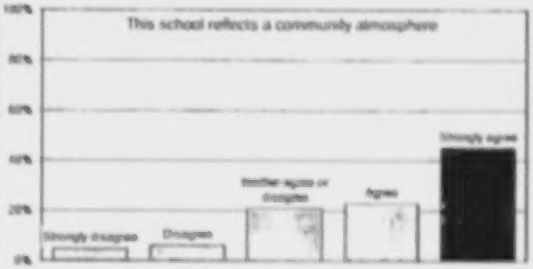
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

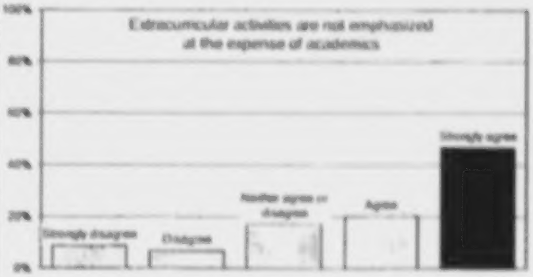
	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Missing
This school has been well received by the community	6.5%	7.6%	20.1%	19.7%	46.2%	3.92	1.24	4.0	712	132	19
I think this school has a bright future	3.4%	2.5%	9.4%	16.5%	68.3%	4.44	0.99	5.0	800	39	24
Too many changes are occurring at the school	38.7%	20.4%	21.4%	8.6%	11.0%	2.33	1.35	2.0	771	63	29
This school reflects a community atmosphere	4.9%	6.1%	21.0%	23.0%	45.0%	3.97	1.16	4.0	753	75	35
Extracurricular activities are not emphasized at the expense of academics	8.9%	6.9%	17.1%	20.4%	46.8%	3.89	1.31	4.0	686	137	40





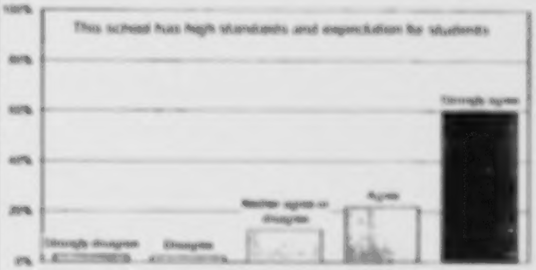


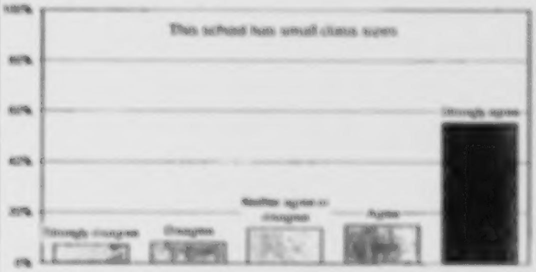


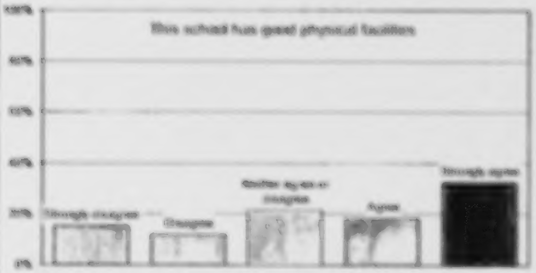


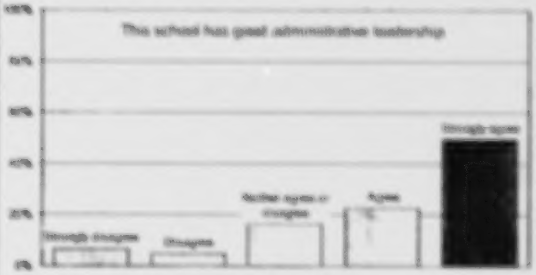
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school?

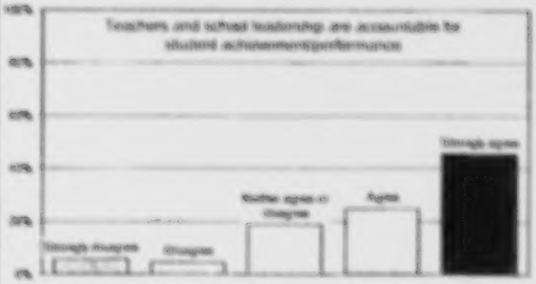
	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly agree 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Missing
This school has high standards and expectation for students	2.9%	2.2%	12.6%	22.1%	60.1%	4.34	0.98	5.0	807	23	33
This school has small class sizes	7.3%	8.1%	13.8%	15.3%	55.4%	4.03	1.30	5.0	802	~30	30
This school has good physical facilities	15.3%	11.8%	21.5%	18.6%	32.7%	3.41	1.43	4.0	763	60	48
This school has good administrative leadership	6.7%	4.7%	16.4%	22.6%	49.6%	4.04	1.21	4.0	808	33	24
Teachers and school leadership are accountable for student achievement/ performance	5.8%	4.7%	18.9%	24.9%	45.7%	4.00	1.16	4.0	782	58	23











Appendix D

Demographic and Background Characteristics of Charter School Students Compared With Host District Students, 2001-02

Charter School	Host District	Percent FRL			Percent White			Percent IEP		
		CS	HD	CS-HD	CS	HD	CS-HD	CS	HD	CS-HD
21st Century Cyber CS	West Chester Area SD	15	7	8	86	85	1	4	19	-15
Alliance for Progress CS	Philadelphia City SD	95	73	22	0	16	-16	7	16	-10
Architecture and Design CHS	Philadelphia City SD	81	73	8	10	16	-6	2	16	-14
Bucks County Montessori CS	Pennsbury SD	0	11	-11	94	89	5	4	19	-15
Career Connections CHS	Pittsburgh SD	80	64	16	69	40	30	12	25	-12
Center for Economics & Law CS	Philadelphia City SD	84	73	11	1	16	-15	4	16	-13
Centre Learning Community CS	Bald Eagle SD, etc.	15	38	-23	87	99	-12	7	12	-5
Chester CS	Chester Upland SD	79	83	-4	1	5	-4	15	18	-3
Chester Co Family Academy CS	West Chester Area SD	92	7	85	9	85	-76	10	19	-9
Chester Community CS	Chester Upland SD	84	83	2	1	5	-4	20	18	2
Christopher Columbus CS	Philadelphia City SD	53	73	-20	40	16	24	5	16	-12
Collegium CS	West Chester Area SD	13	7	6	64	85	-21	17	19	-3
Comm. Acad of Philadelphia CS	Philadelphia City SD	80	73	7	1	16	-15	8	16	-8
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS	York City SD	79	74	5	10	28	-18	23	24	0
Delaware Valley CHS	Philadelphia City SD	75	73	2	1	16	-15	3	16	-14
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	Oxford Area SD	79	26	53	17	81	-64	10	11	-1
Eugenio Maria DE Hostos CS	Philadelphia City SD	75	73	2	0	16	-15	14	16	-2
Family CS	Philadelphia City SD	90	73	17	0	16	-16	11	16	-5
Franklin Towne CHS	Philadelphia City SD	55	73	-18	75	16	59	14	16	-2
Freire CS	Philadelphia City SD	85	73	12	2	16	-13	5	16	-11
GECAC Community CS	Erie City SD	95	71	24	18	56	-37	27	21	7
Germantown Settlement CS	Philadelphia City SD	0	73	-73	0	16	-16	6	16	-10
High Tech High Philadelphia CS	Philadelphia City SD	71	73	-2	5	16	-11	7	16	-10
Imani Educationl Circle CS	Philadelphia City SD	54	73	-19	0	16	-16	6	16	-10
Imhotep Institute CHS	Philadelphia City SD	90	73	17	0	16	-16	9	16	-7

Charter School	Host District	Percent FRL			Percent White			Percent IEP		
		CS	HD	CS-HD	CS	HD	CS-HD	CS	HD	CS-HD
Independence CS	Philadelphia City SD	67	73	-6	15	16	0	5	16	-11
Keystone Education Center CS	Greenville Area SD, etc.	74	34	40	86	98	-12	37	17	20
La Academia CS	Lancaster SD	99	64	35	7	28	-22	27	27	0
Laboratory CS	Philadelphia City SD	93	73	20	5	16	-11	1	16	-16
Leadership Lrng Partners CS	Philadelphia City SD	73	73	0	1	16	-15	4	16	-12
Lincoln-Edison CS	York City SD	90	74	16	21	28	-7	11	24	-12
MaST Community CS	Philadelphia City SD	40	73	-33	75	16	59	8	16	-9
Manchester Academic CS	Pittsburgh SD	41	64	-22	1	40	-39	8	25	-17
Mariana Bracetti Academy CS	Philadelphia City SD	96	73	23	3	16	-13	13	16	-3
Math Civics and Sciences CS	Philadelphia City SD	77	73	4	1	16	-15	3	16	-13
Midwestern Regional Virtual CS	Grove City SD	58	42	16	89	81	8	.	14	.
Multi-Cultural Academy CS	Philadelphia City SD	94	73	21	1	16	-15	2	16	-14
New Foundations CS	Philadelphia City SD	35	73	-38	71	16	55	10	16	-6
Nittany Valley CS	State College Area SD	18	15	3	79	86	-7	17	10	7
Northeast CS	Abington Heights SD, etc.	38	12	26	98	96	2	0	.	.
Northside Urban Pathways CS	Pittsburgh SD	62	64	-2	15	40	-25	18	25	-7
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS	Philadelphia City SD	90	73	17	0	16	-16	10	16	-6
PA Learners Online Reg. Cyber CS	Allegheny Valley SD, etc.	0	25	-25	91	98	-7	4	20	-15
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	Norristown SD	41	54	-13	88	37	50	1	22	-21
People for People CS	Philadelphia City SD	92	73	19	0	16	-16	2	16	-15
Philadelphia Academy CS	Philadelphia City SD	28	73	-45	94	16	78	26	16	10
Philadelphia Harambee Inst CS	Philadelphia City SD	13	73	-60	0	16	-16	1	16	-15
Philadelphia Performing Arts CS	Philadelphia City SD	51	73	-22	75	16	59	7	16	-10
Preparatory CS	Philadelphia City SD	66	73	-7	43	16	27	3	16	-13
Raising Horizons Quest CS	Philadelphia City SD	92	73	19	1	16	-15	3	16	-13
Renaissance Academy-Edison CS	Phoenixville Area SD	17	17	0	67	84	-17	8	18	-10
Renaissance Advantage CS	Philadelphia City SD	55	73	-18	1	16	-15	0	16	-16
Renaissance CS	Philadelphia City SD	80	73	7	0	16	-16	5	16	-11
Richard Allen Preparatory CS	Philadelphia City SD	64	73	-9	0	16	-16	5	16	-12
Ridgeview Academy CS	Greater Latrobe SD	73	19	54	88	98	-11	23	14	9

Charter School	Host District	Percent FRL			Percent White			Percent IEP		
		CS	HD	CS-HD	CS	HD	CS-HD	CS	HD	CS-HD
Roberto Clemente CS	Allentown City SD	93	64	29	0	33	-33	11	11	0
Ronald H Brown CS	Harrisburg City SD	85	83	2	1	6	-5	14	19	-6
Russell Byers CS	Philadelphia City SD	75	73	2	13	16	-3	2	16	-14
School Lane CS	Bensalem Township SD	14	26	-12	77	73	4	9	19	-10
Souderton CS Collaborative	Souderton Area SD	5	7	-2	87	90	-3	12	18	-6
Spectrum CS	Gateway SD	100	25	75	76	83	-7	100	21	79
Sugar Valley Rural CS	Keystone Central SD	38	49	-11	100	98	2	14	17	-4
Susq-Cyber CS	Berwick SD, etc	0	43	-43	98	97	1	0	20	-20
Sylvan Heights Science CS	Harrisburg City SD	86	83	3	5	6	-1	15	19	-4
TEACH-The Einstein Academy CS	Morrisville Boro SD	27	39	-12	88	59	29	.	19	.
Thurgood Marshall CS	Wilkinsburg Boro SD	63	81	-18	1	2	-1	16	19	-3
Universal Institute CS	Philadelphia City SD	29	73	-44	0	16	-15	6	16	-10
Urban League of Pittsburgh CS	Pittsburgh SD	91	64	27	0	40	-40	22	25	-3
Village CS of Chester-Upland	Chester Upland SD	87	83	4	0	5	-4	10	18	-9
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	Bethlehem SD, etc.	92	49	43	37	49	-12	29	13	16
Wakisha CS	Philadelphia City SD	83	73	10	1	16	-15	4	16	-13
West Oak Lane CS	Philadelphia City SD	52	73	-21	0	16	-16	11	16	-5
Western Pennsylvania Cyber CS	Midland Borough SD	20	71	-51	96	56	41	5	14	-9
Wonderland CS	State College Area SD	15	15	-1	62	86	-24	6	10	-4
World Communications CS	Philadelphia City SD	75	73	2	1	16	-15	4	16	-12
Young Scholars CS	Philadelphia City SD	84	73	11	0	16	-16	5	16	-11
Youth Build Phila CS	Philadelphia City SD	75	73	2	1	16	-15	3	16	-13
TOTAL		55.9	52.9	3.0	37.0	46.0	-9	8.8	17.7	-8.9

Appendix E
Demographic and Background Characteristics of Charter School Teachers

		Gender		Status		Type					Race					Level of Education			
Charter School	Total Teachers	Male	Female	Full-Time	Part-Time	Elem.	Secon.	K-12/ Mid.	Sp. Ed.	Speech	Am. Ind./ AK Nat.	Asian / Pac. Isl.	Black	Hisp.	White	Less than BA	BA	MA	PhD
Alliance for Progress CS	20	2	18	18	2	18	2	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	8	0	13	7	0
Architecture and Design CHS	23	10	13	22	1	0	17	6	0	0	0	2	5	2	14	0	14	9	0
Bucks County Montessori CS	5	1	4	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	4	1	0
Career Connections CS	20	11	9	20	0	2	16	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	17	3	0
Center for Econ. and Law CS	16	7	9	16	0	0	15	0	1	0	1	0	6	0	9	0	14	2	0
Centre Learning Com. CS	10	4	6	10	0	7	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	6	1	3
Chest. Co. Family Acad. CS	4	1	3	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	1	0
Chester Community CS	27	2	25	27	0	25	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	25	0	25	2	0
Chester CS	31	3	28	31	0	24	1	4	2	0	0	0	12	0	19	0	28	3	0
Christopher Columbus CS	33	4	29	32	1	32	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	14	16	0	23	10	0
Collegium CS	51	4	47	51	0	39	4	2	6	0	0	3	1	3	44	0	42	9	0
Com. Academy of Phila. CS	19	4	15	19	0	7	10	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	16	0	11	8	0
Crispus Attucks CS	7	3	4	7	0	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	7	1	3	2	1
Delaware Valley CHS	11	6	5	10	1	0	9	1	1	0	1	0	7	0	3	0	8	3	0
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	4	0	4	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	4	0	0
Eugenio Maria de Hostos CS	9	1	8	9	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9	0	0
Family CS	17	6	11	16	1	17	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	9	0	15	2	0
Franklink Towne CS	39	18	21	38	1	1	32	3	3	0	0	1	2	0	36	1	30	8	0
Freire CS	16	5	11	16	0	0	15	1	0	0	0	0	4	1	11	0	12	4	0
GECAC Community CS	19	5	14	18	1	15	1	1	2	0	0	0	4	0	15	0	13	6	0
Germantown Settlement CS	22	4	18	22	0	19	3	0	0	0	0	1	11	0	10	1	14	7	0

Charter School	Total Teachers	Gender		Status		Type					Race					Level of Education			
		Male	Female	Full-Time	Part-Time	Elem.	Secon.	K-12/ Mid.	Sp. Ed.	Speech	Am. Ind./ AK Nat.	Asian / Pac. Isl.	Black	Hisp.	White	Less than BA	BA	MA	PhD
High Tech High Phila. CS	7	5	2	7	0	0	6	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	4	0	3	4	0
Imani Education Circle	21	5	16	20	1	19	2	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	1	0	16	5	0
Imhotep Institute CHS	20	11	9	19	1	0	16	2	2	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	14	5	1
Independence CS	17	0	17	15	2	14	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	4	10	0	8	8	1
Keystone Education Center	24	18	6	23	1	2	16	0	6	0	0	0	0	1	23	0	22	2	0
La Academia CS	7	2	5	7	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	0	7	0	0
Leadership Learn. Partners	29	7	22	29	0	27	1	0	1	0	0	1	10	1	17	2	24	3	0
Lincoln-Edison CS	42	3	39	42	0	34	1	5	2	0	0	0	2	1	39	0	38	4	0
Manchester Academic CS	17	7	10	17	0	6	7	3	1	0	0	0	8	0	9	0	13	4	0
Mariana Bracetti Academy	35	11	24	35	0	2	27	3	3	0	0	0	8	4	23	0	16	18	1
Mast Community CS	60	12	48	60	0	33	19	5	2	1	0	2	2	0	56	0	48	12	0
Math Civics and Sciences	52	25	27	51	1	27	23	2	0	0	0	0	32	0	20	0	38	14	0
Multi-Cultural Academy CS	8	4	4	8	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	7	1	0
New Foundations CS	22	6	16	22	0	20	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	19	0	15	7	0
Nittany Valley CS	8	0	8	4	4	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	8	0	0
North. Urban Pathways CS	14	7	7	14	0	3	7	1	3	0	0	0	2	0	12	0	13	1	0
Northeast CS	6	4	2	6	0	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	5	1	0
Nueva Esperanza CS	25	15	10	25	0	0	21	1	3	0	0	0	3	5	17	0	18	7	0
PA Learners Online CS	8	2	6	0	8	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	7	1	0
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	14	0	14	14	0	12	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	6	8	0
People for People CS	21	3	18	21	0	19	0	1	1	0	0	0	11	0	10	0	12	9	0
Phila. Harambee Institute	16	5	11	16	0	15	1	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	1	7	7	1
Philadelphia Academy CS	43	7	36	43	0	33	2	0	7	1	0	1	2	0	40	0	31	11	1
Philadelphia Perf. Arts CS	18	1	17	18	0	15	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	16	2	0
Preparatory CS	21	9	12	20	1	0	20	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	16	1	13	7	0
Raising Horizons Quest CS	23	7	16	23	0	19	0	1	3	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	22	1	0
Ren. Academy-Edison CS	43	6	37	43	0	28	9	2	4	0	0	0	0	1	42	0	39	4	0
Renaissance CS	9	2	7	8	1	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	2	7	0

Charter School	Total Teachers	Gender		Status		Type					Race					Level of Education			
		Male	Female	Full-Time	Part-Time	Elem.	Secon.	K-12/ Mid.	Sp. Ed.	Speech	Am. Ind./ AK Nat.	Asian / Pac. Isl.	Black	Hisp.	White	Less than BA	BA	MA	PhD
Renaissance-Advantage CS	25	7	18	25	0	23	2	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	7	0	18	6	1
Richard Allen Prep CS	10	3	7	10	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	8	2	0
Ridgeview Academy CS	76	22	54	71	5	7	60	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	76	0	71	5	0
Roberto Clemente CS	10	3	7	10	0	2	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	7	1	7	2	0
Ronald H. Brown CS	32	6	26	32	0	24	2	2	4	0	0	0	13	2	17	2	25	5	0
Russell Byers CS	11	2	9	11	0	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	9	0	4	7	0
School Lane CS	31	5	26	31	0	25	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	28	0	27	4	0
Souderton CS Collaborative	6	0	6	6	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	3	3	0
Spectrum CS	5	1	4	5	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	3	0
Sugar Valley Rural CS	17	5	12	16	1	7	5	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	17	0	16	1	0
Sylvan Heights Science Ctr	11	2	9	11	0	10	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	10	0	10	1	0
The Einstein Academy CS	24	9	15	24	0	11	12	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	21	0	19	4	1
The Laboratory CS	36	10	26	34	2	27	6	3	0	0	0	3	4	2	27	3	27	6	0
Thurgood Marshall CS	4	0	4	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	2	0
Universal Institute CS	25	6	19	25	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	2	8	0	12	11	2
Urban League of Pitt. CS	8	2	6	8	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	5	0	7	1	0
Village CS of Chester-Upland	42	13	29	42	0	26	10	2	4	0	0	2	26	1	13	0	31	10	1
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	11	0	11	0	11	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	11	0	7	4	0
Wakisha CS	26	11	15	25	1	12	11	2	1	0	0	2	22	0	2	0	17	9	0
West Oak Lane CS	25	2	23	25	0	21	1	0	3	0	0	0	15	1	9	0	24	1	0
Wester PA Cyber CS	4	1	3	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	0
Wonderland CS	4	0	4	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	0
World Communications CS	21	7	14	21	0	0	19	2	0	0	0	0	18	0	3	0	13	8	0
Young Scholars CS	9	3	6	9	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	5	0	6	2	1
YouthBuild Philadelphia CS	5	2	3	5	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	4	1	0
Totals	1,511	407	1,104	1,463	48	849	491	71	97	3	2	25	408	67	1,009	13	1,144	339	15
Percentages		26.9%	73.1%	96.8%	3.2%	56.2%	32.5%	4.7%	6.4%	0.2%	0.1%	1.7%	27.0%	4.4%	66.8%	0.9%	75.7%	22.4%	1.0%

Appendix F
Methodological Details on the Analysis of Student Achievement Results

Chapter 12 reported the results of some fairly sophisticated statistical analysis of scores from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). In order to keep the chapter accessible to most readers, we avoided detailed discussion of those methods. This appendix provides additional detail on these methods. Specific topics include

- ☐ Measurement of student achievement
- ☐ Calculating the filtered scores used in Chapter 12
- ☐ Summarizing the trends in the filtered scores reported in Chapter 12

This appendix aims to present these methods in terms that are clear to the attentive but nonexpert reader. A more technical and mathematical exposition of these methods may be obtained from the authors.

F.1 Measuring Student Achievement

In selecting an achievement measure, the controlling criterion was the need to find an assessment that would facilitate comparisons among charter schools and between charter and noncharter public schools. The PSSA is, to our knowledge, the only assessment that is administered in all Pennsylvania charter and noncharter public schools. Since the 1995-96 academic year, the PSSA has assessed students in grades 5, 8, and 11 in both mathematics and reading. A writing assessment for sixth and ninth graders was phased in gradually, with approximately 66 percent of schools participating in 1995-96, 75 percent in 1996-97, 75 percent in 1997-98, and 92 percent in 1998-99.[1] However, no writing data are reported in files for the 1999/2000, 2000/01, and 2001/02 academic years. Thus, we have not included writing scores in this analysis.

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[1] School participation rates were calculated from raw data files of writing scores provided by PDE. Beginning in the 2000-01 school year, all public schools are required to participate in the grade 6, 9, and 11 PSSA writing assessments.

Score Formats

PDE documents and data files report PSSA scores in two formats. First, they report the percentage of students in a given school or district scoring in each of four groups that correspond roughly to quartiles.[2] Second, PDE files report a scaled score whose range is approximately 1000-1600. Beginning in 2000, few schools scored slightly above or below these values. While each student receives such a score, public data files include only aggregate mean values for each school.

For all analyses we focused on scaled scores rather than quartile percentages, because mean scaled scores can simultaneously capture change in all four quartiles. Indeed, it can be shown that the percentage of students falling in one quartile can change without changing the percentage in all of the remaining quartiles. Thus, analyses that focus on a single quartile (e.g., those that establish a "cut point" such as the bottom quartile as the primary measure) risk missing significant changes in student achievement.

During the first year of its administration (1995-96), scaled scores were constructed so that the mean was 1300 and the standard deviation 100. All subsequent versions of the test have been statistically equated to the 1995-96 version. This means that the scale is "anchored" in the 1995-96 test and any increases or decreases in scaled scores reflect actual changes in student achievement, not just changes in the distribution of scores across the Commonwealth. Operationally, a 1300 in any subsequent year represents the mean for the 1995-96 academic year.[3] PSSA scores, then, allow evaluators to compare students in one school with students from another school. They also allow evaluators to assess growth or decline over time at the school level, subject to the limitations imposed by the need to rely on school-level mean scores.[4] As discussed in Chapter 12, PSSA scores may not be used to track individual student progress from one year to the next. The filtering methodology outlined in this appendix is designed to compensate partially for this feature of the PSSA.

Data Sources

PSSA scores for the 1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-2000, and 2000-01 academic years came from raw data files posted on the PDE Web site. Scores for the 2001-02 academic year were provided to us directly by PDE.[5] Data on other attributes of charter and noncharter schools (e.g., concentration of low income students) came from raw data files associated with the Pennsylvania School Profiles, the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD), and from special runs provided by PDE.

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[2] The quartiles are anchored in the 1995-96 results. Thus, in subsequent years PDE has referred these as "group scores" since they are no longer quartiles in the strict sense.

[3] Equating also implies that after 1995-96 there can be more or fewer than 25 percent of students in any one of the four "quartiles." For this reason subsequent to 1995-96 the normative distribution is referred to as the top, high-middle, low-middle, and bottom groups rather than "quartiles" per se. We continue to use the term "quartile" for ease in exposition.

[4] The PSSA, however, does not provide a developmental metric. That is, one cannot say, for instance, that a 1310 on the grade 8 math examination represents 10 points worth of gain over a 1300 on the grade 5 math examination. Strictly speaking, all the scores can tell us is where a given student stands in relation to his or her peers who took the examination in 1995-96.

Table F:1 shows the number of schools reporting test scores for each subject area and grade level during the 5 years of the Commonwealth's charter school initiative. The number of schools reporting PSSA scores reflects two trends outlined in Chapter 3. First, there are generally more charter schools serving students at the elementary and middle school levels. Second, the increasing number of schools reporting scores over time reflects the growth in the movement over time.

For some of the analyses reported in Chapter 12, we used school-level aggregate scores. These scores are simply the unweighted mean of scores reported by a given school for all grade levels and subject areas.[6] Use of the aggregate scores helps simplify the exposition in Chapter 12. Using the aggregate scores also increases the number of schools included in the analyses, since a school must report scores in only one subject and grade to be included in the analysis. As discussed in Chapter 12, we also conducted analyses by grade level and subject area to ensure that aggregation did not mask important variations.

Table F:1 Number of Charter Schools Participating in the PSSA by Subject/Grade

Portion of the PSSA	*Number of Schools Tested*				
	1997-98	*1998-99*	*1999-2000*	*2000-01*	*2001-02*
Math 5	1	9	18	24	38
Reading 5	1	9	18	24	38
Math 8	3	8	14	23	36
Reading 8	3	8	14	23	36
Math 11	2	5	11	14	27
Reading 11	2	5	11	14	27
School-Level Aggregate Scores	4	16	31	40	60

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[5] We owe a particular debt of gratitude to Gerald Bennett and Leonard Lock for providing the data files to us in a timely manner.

[6] We sought to weight the aggregate values by grade level enrollments. However, missing grade level enrollment data on a number of schools made this impossible. As a result, the aggregate scores might give too much weight to grade levels with few students and too little to grade levels with many students.

F.2 Calculating the Filtered Scores

As discussed in Chapter 12, unadjusted PSSA scores are inadequate for assessing the charter school impact on student achievement. Since achievement scores reflect both (a) school effectiveness and (b) student background characteristics, evaluators must find some way to distinguish the two. We have employed a statistical technique for filtering out student background characteristics. The filters operate by comparing each charter school's PSSA score(s) with a comparison group of schools that are demographically and geographically similar to the charter school. The filtered scores, then, are the difference between the charter school score and the score "predicted" by the matched comparison group.

In the remainder of this section we expound the filtering methodology in two ways. First, we provide a graphical exposition. Second, we describe (in relatively nontechnical language) the formal statistical technique used to create the comparison groups.

Graphical Exposition of the Filtering Method

Figure F:1 provides a graphical illustration of how the filtering method works. For each of the 5 years illustrated there are two bell-shaped curves. The larger curves represent the distribution of PSSA scores for all noncharter public schools. The smaller curves represent the PSSA score distribution of a smaller comparison group of noncharter public schools. The comparison schools are selected on the basis of income, race, urbanicity, concentration of special education students, enrollment, and participation rates on the PSSA. In addition, the comparison distributions are restricted to noncharter public schools in districts that sponsor charter schools. This ensures that the comparison group is matched, not only on readily measurable factors such as income, but also on less tangible factors that are correlated with location.[7] The dashed lines show the means of each distribution.

The filtered score, as represented in the diagram, is the "distance" between the score reported by the charter school (represented by "CS") and mean of the comparison distribution (represented by the vertical line at the center of the smaller bell curve). Thus, if the charter school score is higher than the mean of the comparison distribution, the filtered score will be positive. Similarly, if the charter school score is lower than the mean of the comparison distribution, the filtered score will be negative. Inasmuch as the comparison schools are similar to the charter schools in all relevant respects (save for charter status, of course), the difference between the two will provide a reasonable estimate of the charter school's impact on student achievement.[8] As discussed in Chapter 12, the filtered scores for most charter schools lie well below the mean for all noncharter public schools but just slightly below the mean of their customized comparison groups.

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[7] For instance, inclusion of the geographical parameter in the comparison strategy allows for the possibility that low income has different effects in rural and urban areas.

[8] Comparing charter school scores with those of a distribution of comparison schools–as opposed to a single comparison school–is desirable in that the results are less dependent upon the particular qualities of a single comparison school, which might itself be an outlier.

The process of filtering out student background factors requires the analyst to fully specify all relevant variables on which charter and noncharter schools might be different. Since it is unlikely that we have captured all of those characteristics, the filtered scores are not foolproof. Nonetheless, they provide a reasonable estimate of trends in school effectiveness.

The analysis in Chapter 12, however, relies not on single filtered scores but on temporal trends in those scores. Thus, for each school, a unique comparison group is estimated for each year. This allows the analysis to capture the impact of changes in student population and distinguish them from temporal changes due to increasing (or decreasing) school effectiveness.

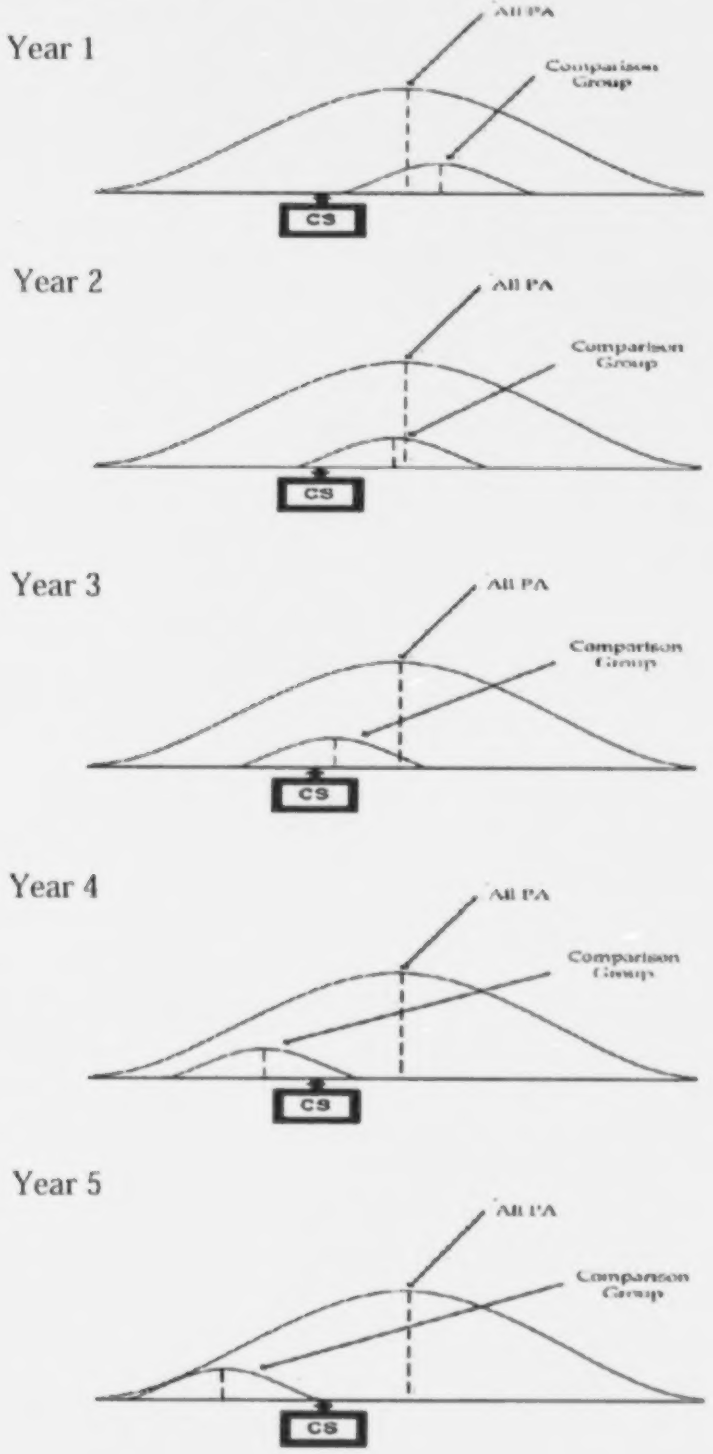
Year 1
All PA
Comparison Group
CS
Year 2
All PA
Comparison Group
CS
Year 3
All PA
Comparison Group
CS
Year 4
All PA
Comparison Group
CS
Year 5
All PA
Comparison Group
CS

Figure F:1

The illustration in Figure F:2 shows a case in which the charter school's achievement level remains the same over the five year period (just below the mean of the distribution of all noncharter public schools) but in which the school's comparison group shifts downward. This downward shift in the comparison group distribution is due to the school enrolling increasingly disadvantaged students over time. The end result is that the charter school's filtered scores trend up considerably over the five years, even as its unadjusted scores remain constant. The filtered scores, therefore, make allowances for the fact that the charter school has faced an increasingly high degree of difficulty over time. Figure F:2 shows the trend in filtered scores that results from the hypothetical illustration in Figure F:1.

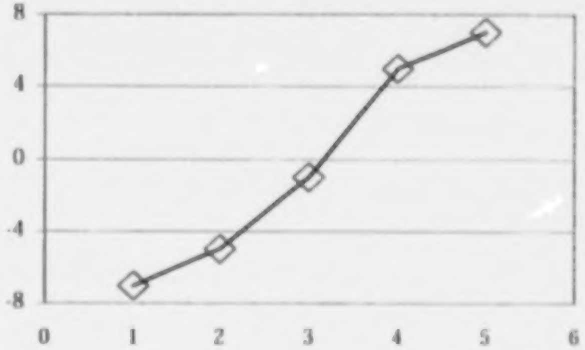

Figure F:2 Trend in Filtered Scores Resulting From Hypothetical Illustration in Figure F:1

A More Technical Exposition

The most intuitive approach to constructing the comparison distributions above would be to define ranges on each of the variables (e.g., 40 to 50 percent eligibility for free/reduced-price lunch) and group the schools according to these ranges. The analyst would compare each charter school's PSSA pass rate (or percentage of students at or above standards) with the pass rates of other schools in its cohort group. The procedure would be essentially the same if the analyst wished to add more demographic variables to the construction of the groups.

There are, however, a number of practical problems with this intuitive approach. First, it requires the analyst to make some rather arbitrary decisions about the ranges used to sort the cases. It is not clear, for instance, whether the income group should be constructed by deciles (e.g., 0 to 10 percent, 11 to 20 percent, etc.), by quintiles (0 to 20 percent, 21 to 40 percent, etc.), or some other range. Second, the intuitive approach can be burdensome when using many demographic variables since it requires the analyst to specify a large number of mutually exclusive and logically complete categories. The regression model provides a convenient alternative to this approach. Instead of using a set of rules to mechanically select a comparison group, regression models allow for statistical controls that enable the analyst to compare each charter school's score with demographically similar schools.

Assume, as an illustration, that the analyst wants to create comparison groups based only on the concentration of low income students in a school. In this case, the analyst would simply regress the PSSA score against income for all noncharter public schools. Explained in intuitive terms, the regression procedure simply finds the line (mathematical function) that best relates income to PSSA scores. Mathematically, this entails finding the line that minimizes the distance between each data point in two-dimensional space and the regression line.

Figure F:3 provides a graphical example. The top line running from northwest to southeast is the regression line for all noncharter public schools. The regression line can be viewed as the set of predicted pass rates for each level of income. Alternatively, the regression line may be viewed as the set of mean PSSA scores for comparison schools at each level of income.[9]

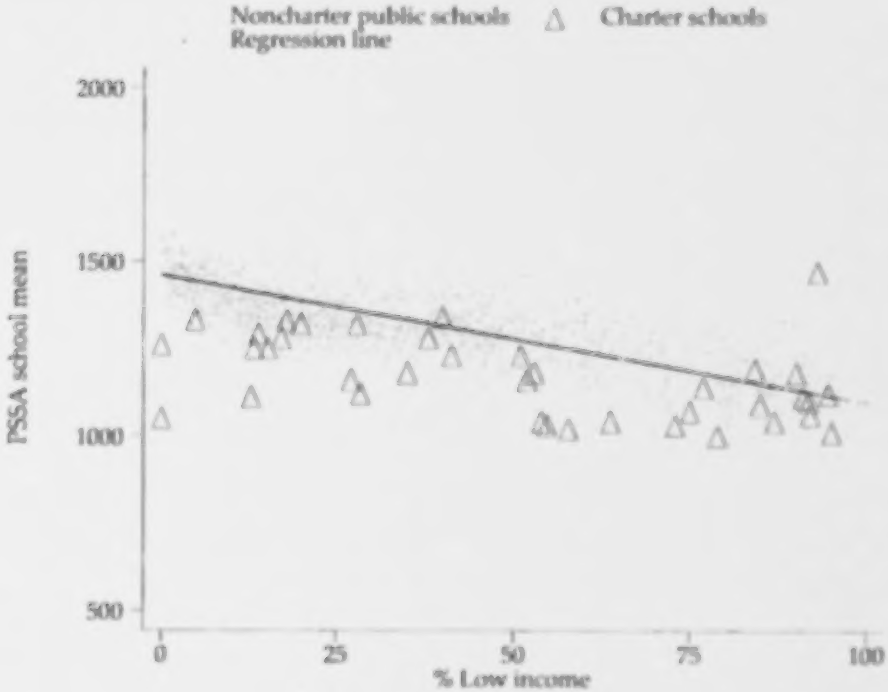

Figure F:3 Illustration of Using Regression to Calculate Filtered PSSA Scores

Regression estimates can also be represented mathematically as a line. Generally, a regression of PSSA scores on income may be written as

$$PSSA_i = a + b_1 INCOME_i + e_i$$

where $PSSA_i$ is the pass rate for a given school i, a is a constant intercept term, $INCOME_i$ is the concentration of low income students in a given school i, b_1 is the slope coefficient of the regression line, and e_i the "residual" (or unexplained variation) for a given school *i*.[10] The regression shown in Figure F:3 can be represented mathematically by

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[9] Visually, the prediction line in this example does not exactly minimize the differences between observed and predicted values because the graph holds other demographic factors in the model at their mean values.

$$PSSA_i = 1460 - (3.6 * INCOME_i) + e_i$$

To get the filtered score, we calculate the difference between observed pass rate and the pass rate predicted by the model. Put another way, it is the difference between the charter school's pass rate and that of its demographically matched comparison group.

As an example, consider a charter school with 21 percent FRL students and a pass rate of 1310 percent on the PSSA. To generate the residual value for this school, we simply substitute its reported concentration of low income students (21 percent) into the equation. This yields a predicted pass rate of 59 percent.

$$PSSA = 1384 = 1460 - (3.6 * 21)$$

Since the residual is the observed pass rate minus the predicted pass rate, we can derive the residual by subtracting its predicted score of 1384 percent from its observed score of 1310. This generates a residual of -74, which tells us that the school's score was 74 points lower than that of the typical school in its demographic cohort.

The procedure for generating comparisons based on more than one demographic variable requires a related, though more complex, approach called multivariate regression. The basic idea, however, remains the same. Graphically, the multivariate regression model is extended into multidimensional space, with an additional dimension for each demographic variable added. Fortunately, computers can easily think in multiple dimensions and can generate the regression estimates using matrix algebra (see, e.g., Kmenta, 1986).[11]

In any regression model, the accuracy of the predicted values (and thereby the residuals) depends upon the choice of independent variables. For this report, the evaluation team relied on standard models of student achievement found in the production function literature and elsewhere. These models include, among other things, prior achievement levels, family income and education, race, mobility and, more recently, previous educational experiences. The data files available for this evaluation included standard measures of family income, race, and a limited number of other characteristics. However, they either did not include or had too

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[10] The residuals are usually assumed to be normally distributed, have a constant variance, uncorrelated with the explanatory variables (e.g. income), and uncorrelated one with the other.

[11] If Y is an n x 1 vector of observed pass rates and X is an n x k matrix (where n is the number of observations and k the number of demographic variables) of observations on the demographic variables, the multiple regression coefficient is given by:

$$\beta = (X'X)(X'Y)$$

many missing values on such factors as family education, prior achievement, and so on. Moreover, we were not able to obtain any information on students' precharter achievement levels. The final model employed in the regression analysis modeled PSSA scores as a function of family income, race, concentration of special education students, enrollment, PSSA participation rate, and urbanicity. Table F:2 provides the operationalizations for each of these variables.

Table F:2 Operationalization of Variables in Regression Models

Variable	*Operationalization*	*Data Source*
Family income	Percent of students in school i eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	PDE data files
Race	Percent of black, Asian, Hispanic, and Indian students in school i. (Percent white students was captured in the intercept term)	PDE data files for 2000-01 and 2001-02. Common Core of Data for 1997-98, 1998-99, and 1999-2000.
Special education status	Percent of students in school i with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)	Common Core of Data
Urbanicity	U.S. Census Bureau's 8-point urbanicity classification (entered as individual dummy variables to address nonlinearity)	Common Core of Data
PSSA participation rate	Percent students eligible to take the PSSA exam who returned exams	PDE files
School enrollment	The logarithm of total school enrollment	PDE files

In a small number of cases there were missing values on one or more variables for charter schools. Where there were a sufficient number of nonmissing observations for a given school, we estimated the missing values by calculating the trend in these values over time and predicting or interpolating the missing values based on the estimated trends.[12] Where there were not enough nonmissing observations, we simply entered the mean of the nonmissing observations for the missing value(s).[13]

In all instances, the regression models were estimated only on noncharter public schools in districts sponsoring charter schools. This allowed us to control for charter-noncharter differences that are not fully captured by the variables in Table F:2 but are correlated with location.[14]

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[12] Trends were estimated by linear and quadratic regressions.

[13] The variables were entered additively into regression models that were estimated using weighted least squares (WLS), which gives more weight to larger schools than smaller schools. As is typical of aggregated data, ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates showed evidence of heteroskedasticity; the WLS estimates were largely free of heteroskedasticity. Other diagnostics revealed no serious violations of standard Gauss-Markov assumptions. Readers may contact Dr. Nelson for more technical detail on estimation and diagnostics.

F.3 Summarizing Trends in Filtered Scores

The techniques described in the previous section yielded a filtered (i.e., residual) score for each grade and subject area (e.g., fifth grade math, eighth grade reading, etc.) in each charter school reporting PSSA data. As discussed in Chapter 12, we were mainly interested in observing changes in these filtered scores over time. We undertook a number of steps to summarize and interpret trends in the filtered scores. First, as discussed above, we created aggregate filtered scores for each school by taking the simple unweighted average of filtered scores for each subject and grade. Second, for each consecutive pair of years (e.g., 1997-98 to 1998-99, 1999-2000 to 2000-01, 2000-01 to 2001-02) we calculated a change score.[15] Averaging these change scores yields annual average changes, which were used as a single summary indicator of the achievement growth of each school relative to its comparison groups. In order to get an overall summary estimate of growth in all of the Commonwealth's charter schools, we took the average of average annual gains across all charter schools. These were weighted by enrollment and the number of years in each school's trend line.

The remainder of this appendix provides school-by-school graphs of filtered scores over time. The first two pages of graphs (Figures F:4 and F:5) plot filtered scores against time. The horizontal line at zero is the score at which charter school performance is exactly the same as its comparison group of schools. Scores above the zero line indicate that the charter school performed better than its comparison group, while scores below the zero line indicate that the charter school performed below its comparison group.

The second two pages of graphs (Figures F:6 and F:7) are included to show how the filtered scores are derived from the difference between charter school scores and those of their comparison schools. These graphs include two trends–one for the charter school and the other for the comparison schools. Since the comparison school is customized for each year, the trends in comparison schools should not be interpreted as changes in a stable cohort of schools. Unlike the first two pages of graphs, the score metric in these graphs is the PSSA scaled score, which typically ranges from approximately 1000 to 1600.

Tables F:3 and F:4 include specific data for individual schools. Table F:3 contains PSSA results for math and reading over the past five years. Actual and predicted scores are included as well as the difference between the two. This table also provides a map of the data that actually exists. As one can see, many of the schools have very little data available due to the newness of the school or the fact that it does not enroll students at grades levels included in the PSSA. Table F:4 contains the average annual change score for each charter school.

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[14] We also estimated the regressions on noncharter public schools in Intermediate Units with charter schools. In almost all cases, the results were, for practical purposes, indistinguishable.

[15] In statistical parlance, these are simply the first differences.

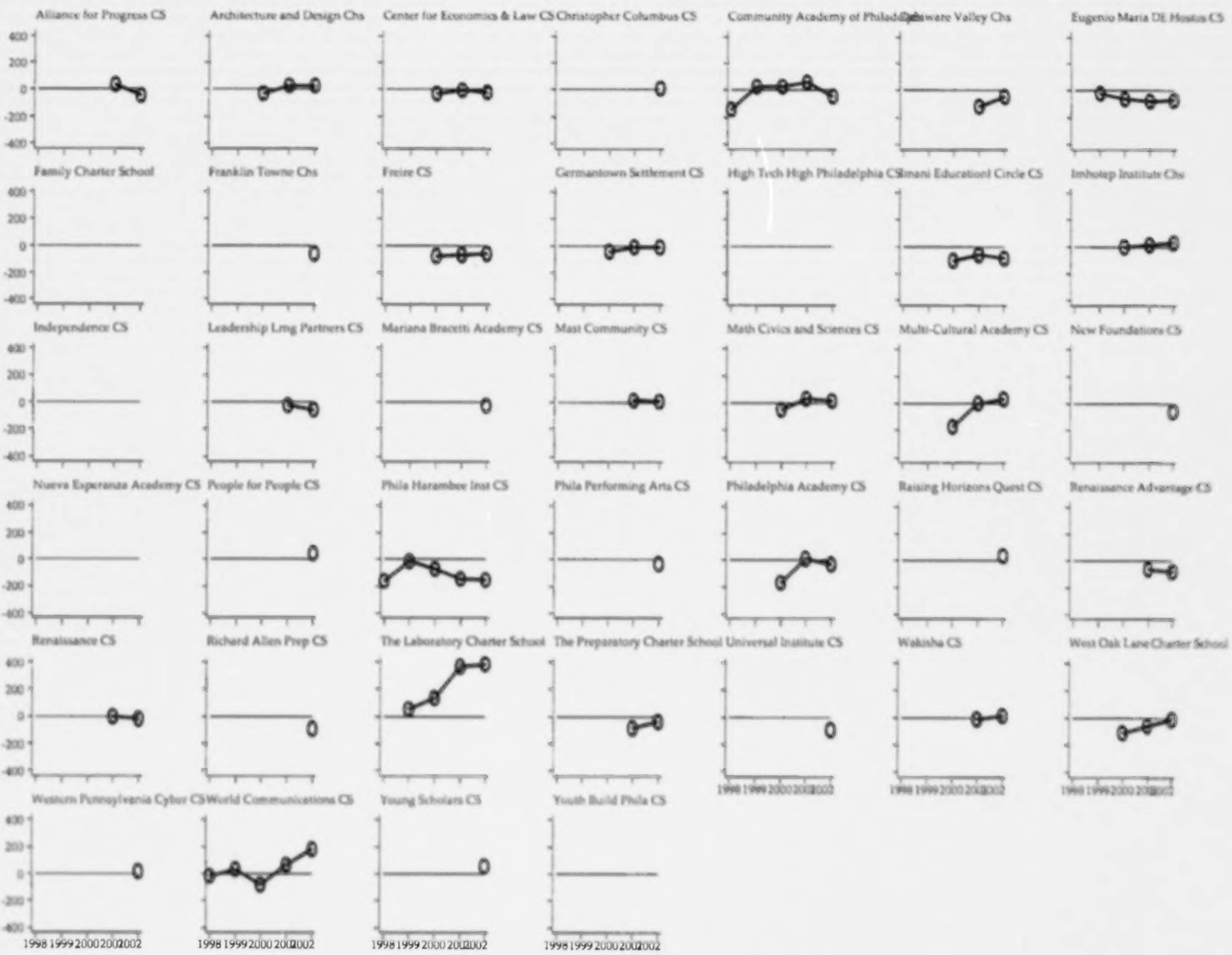

Figure F:4 Trends in Filtered Scores by School

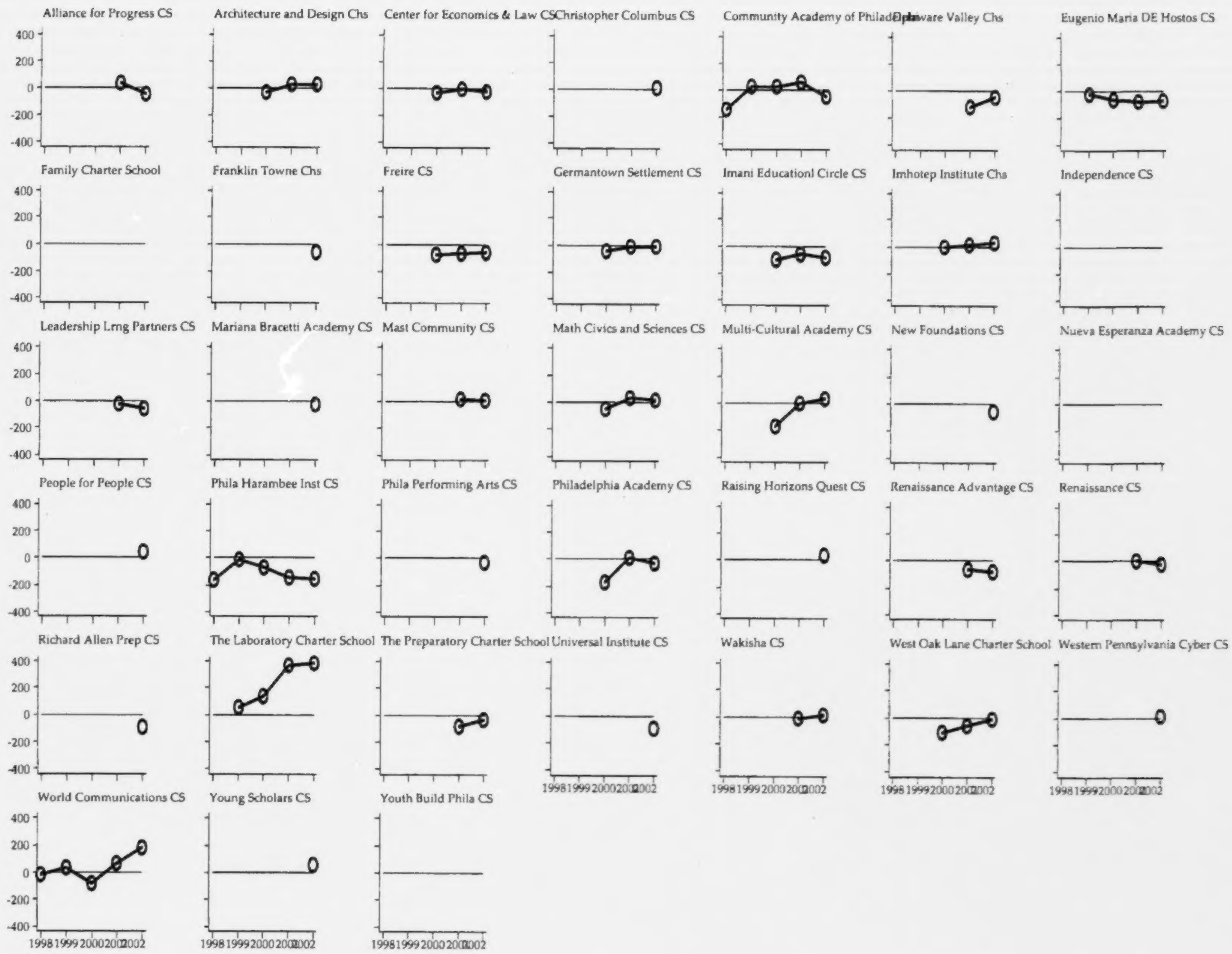

Figure F:5 Trends in Filtered Scores by School

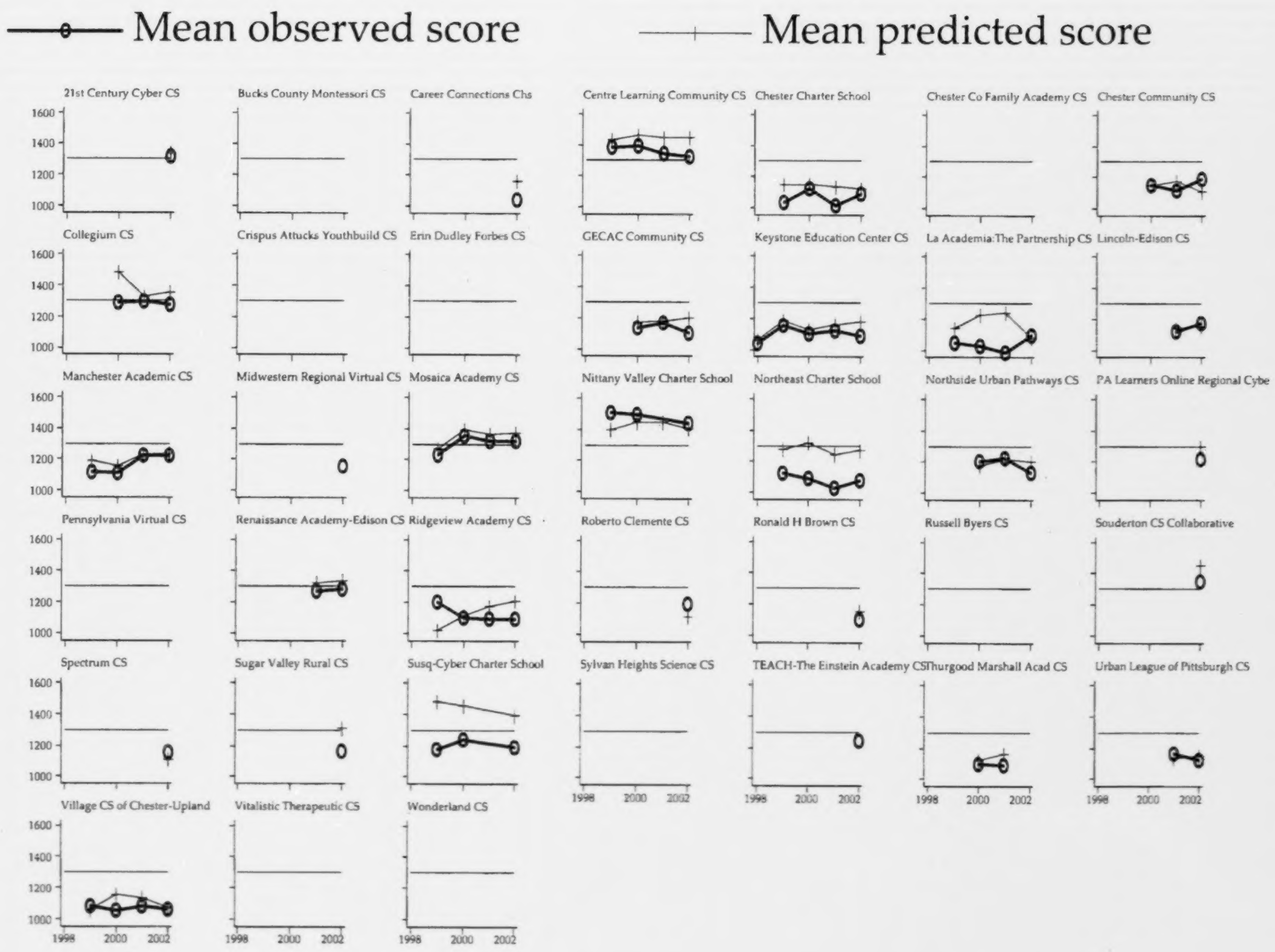

Figure F:6 Trends in PSSA Scaled Scores for Charter and Comparison Schools, by School

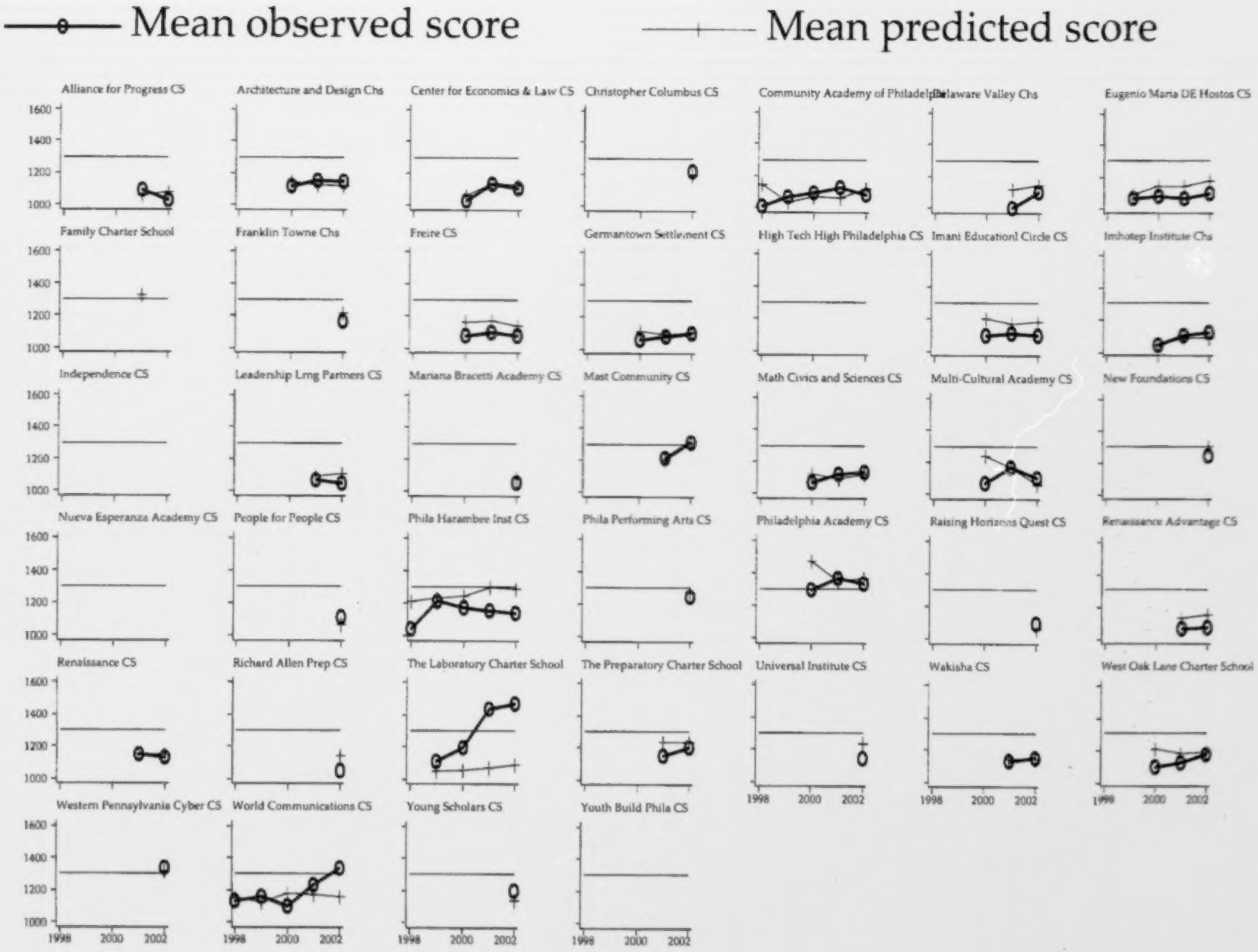

Figure F:7 Trends in PSSA Scaled Scores for Charter and Comparison Schools, by School

Table F:3

Charter School PSSA Scores by School, Year and Test

School Name	Year	Enrollment	Math Grade 5			Reading Grade 5			Math Grade 8			Reading Grade 8			Math Grade 11			Reading Grade 11		
			Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference
21st Century Cyber CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
21st Century Cyber CS		.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
21st Century Cyber CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
21st Century Cyber CS	2001	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
21st Century Cyber CS	2002	120	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1300	1353.7	-53.7	1330	1321.0	9.0
Alliance for Progress CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Alliance for Progress CS	1999	164	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Alliance for Progress CS	2000	189	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Alliance for Progress CS	2001	283	1100	1071.2	28.8	1090	1051.0	39.0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Alliance for Progress CS	2002	282	1010	1080.2	-70.2	1050	1076.1	-26.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Architecture and Design Chs	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Architecture and Design Chs	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Architecture and Design Chs	2000	389	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1110	1171.0	.	1130	1123.0	.
Architecture and Design Chs	2001	303	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1140	1096.2	43.8	1170	1159.4	10.6
Architecture and Design Chs	2002	345	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1130	1128.0	2.0	1160	1111.0	49.0
Bucks County Montessori CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bucks County Montessori CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bucks County Montessori CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bucks County Montessori CS	2001	110	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bucks County Montessori CS	2002	131	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Career Connections Chs	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Career Connections Chs	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Career Connections Chs	2000	64	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Career Connections Chs	2001	122	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Career Connections Chs	2002	202	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1050	1172.1	-122.1	1030	1144.7	-114.7
Center for Economics & Law CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Center for Economics & Law CS	1999	183	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Center for Economics & Law CS	2000	293	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1060	1070.2	-10.2	1000	1049.8	-49.8
Center for Economics & Law CS	2001	309	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1110	1104.0	6.0	1150	1170.0	-20.0
Center for Economics & Law CS	2002	352	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1060	1129.6	-69.6	1150	1119.6	30.4
Centre Learning Community CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Centre Learning Community CS	1999	48	1370	1449.9	-79.9	1400	1414.7	-14.7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Centre Learning Community CS	2000	72	1350	1463.5	-113.5	1430	1451.5	-21.5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Centre Learning Community CS	2001	92	1260	1445.3	-185.3	1290	1466.3	-176.3	1400	1402.7	-2.7	1410	1461.8	-51.8	.	.	.	.	.	.
Centre Learning Community CS	2002	123	1250	1457.8	-207.8	1260	1449.2	-189.2	1380	1425.3	-45.3	1390	1433.8	-43.8	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Charter School	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Charter School	1999	284	1000	1170.7	-170.7	1070	1128.4	-58.4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Charter School	2000	275	1100	1159.2	-59.2	1140	1131.1	8.9	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Charter School	2001	331	1010	1148.1	-138.1	1010	1122.2	-112.2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Charter School	2002	406	1000	1134.9	-134.9	1060	1126.1	-66.1	1180	1093.3	86.7	1120	1130.6	-10.6	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Co Family Academy CS	1998	37	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Co Family Academy CS	1999	45	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Co Family Academy CS	2000	47	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Co Family Academy CS	2001	45	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Co Family Academy CS	2002	67	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Community CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Community CS	1999	146	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Community CS	2000	200	1140	1166.9	-26.9	1160	1129.8	30.2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Community CS	2001	201	1100	1188.9	-88.9	1130	1158.8	-28.8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chester Community CS	2002	575	1190	1111.7	78.3	1190	1103.0	87.0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table F:3

Charter School PSSA Scores by School, Year and Test

School Name	Year	Enroll-ment	Math Grade 5			Reading Grade 5			Math Grade 8			Reading Grade 8			Math Grade 11			Reading Grade 11		
			Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference
Christopher Columbus CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Christopher Columbus CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Christopher Columbus CS	2000	328	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Christopher Columbus CS	2001	424	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Christopher Columbus CS	2002	507	1180	1197.9	-17.9	1250	1201.2	48.8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Collegium CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Collegium CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Collegium CS	2000	70	1290	1498.6	-208.6	1280	1461.1	-181.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Collegium CS	2001	533	1280	1326.5	-46.5	1310	1325.9	-15.9	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Collegium CS	2002	647	1250	1358.7	-108.7	1230	1360.7	-130.7	1290	1343.1	-53.1	1310	1355.7	-45.7	.	.	.	.	.	.
Community Acad. of Phila. CS	1998	180	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1000	1169.9	-169.9	1010	1122.1	-112.1
Community Acad. of Phila. CS	1999	260	.	.	.	.	.	.	1050	1028.1	21.9	1050	966.1	83.9	1040	1082.1	-42.1	1130	1068.9	61.1
Community Acad. of Phila. CS	2000	270	.	.	.	.	.	.	1080	1070.8	9.2	1100	1034.5	65.5	1110	1114.8	-4.8	1090	1053.6	36.4
Community Acad. of Phila. CS	2001	277	.	.	.	.	.	.	1080	1116.0	-36.0	1130	1094.5	35.5	1110	990.6	119.4	1190	1053.6	136.4
Community Acad. of Phila. CS	2002	419	.	.	.	.	.	.	1100	1144.2	-44.2	1090	1123.7	-33.7	1050	1116.7	-66.7	1070	1106.1	-36.1
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS	2000	44	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS	2001	50	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS	2002	60	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Delaware Valley Chs	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Delaware Valley Chs	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Delaware Valley Chs	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Delaware Valley Chs	2001	250	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1030	1097.7	-67.7	970	1144.9	-174.9
Delaware Valley Chs	2002	356	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1080	1154.5	-74.5	1120	1140.5	-20.5
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	2001	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	2002	30	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Eugenio Maria DE Hostos CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Eugenio Maria DE Hostos CS	1999	105	1050	1132.9	-82.9	1070	1036.5	33.5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Eugenio Maria DE Hostos CS	2000	178	1070	1167.2	-97.2	1080	1114.3	-34.3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Eugenio Maria DE Hostos CS	2001	206	1020	1155.4	-135.4	1010	1103.2	-93.2	1100	1149.3	-49.3	1110	1144.3	-34.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
Eugenio Maria DE Hostos CS	2002	208	1070	1205.0	-135.0	1110	1172.5	-62.5	1100	1161.7	-61.7	1100	1136.5	-36.5	.	.	.	.	.	.
Family Charter School	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Family Charter School	1999	84	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Family Charter School	2000	122	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Family Charter School	2001	122	.	1312.9	.	.	1344.3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Family Charter School	2002	169	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Franklin Towne Chs	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Franklin Towne Chs	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Franklin Towne Chs	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Franklin Towne Chs	2001	456	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Franklin Towne Chs	2002	686	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1140	1228.3	-88.3	1180	1203.5	-23.5
Freire CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Freire CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Freire CS	2000	110	.	.	.	.	.	.	1070	1154.9	-84.9	1090	1164.2	-74.2	.	.	.	.	.	.
Freire CS	2001	160	.	.	.	.	.	.	1100	1165.4	-65.4	1100	1177.9	-77.9	.	.	.	.	.	.
Freire CS	2002	207	.	.	.	.	.	.	1100	1143.6	-43.6	1050	1125.7	-75.7	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table F:3

Charter School PSSA Scores by School, Year and Test

School Name	Year	Enroll-ment	Math Grade 5			Reading Grade 5			Math Grade 8			Reading Grade 8			Math Grade 11			Reading Grade 11		
			Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference
GECAC Community CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
GECAC Community CS	1999	195	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
GECAC Community CS	2000	237	1150	1173.2	-23.2	1110	1166.4	-56.4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
GECAC Community CS	2001	281	1210	1183.2	26.8	1120	1176.1	-56.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
GECAC Community CS	2002	310	1120	1203.5	-83.5	1070	1190.3	-120.3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Germantown Settlement CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Germantown Settlement CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Germantown Settlement CS	2000	385	1060	1106.1	-46.1	1060	1107.5	-47.5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Germantown Settlement CS	2001	515	1060	1081.3	-21.3	1110	1067.9	42.1	1080	1111.3	-31.3	1070	1091.8	-21.8	.	.	.	.	.	.
Germantown Settlement CS	2002	517	1050	1083.0	-33.0	1100	1077.0	23.0	1100	1135.0	-35.0	1130	1130.0	10.0	.	.	.	.	.	.
High Tech High Philadelphia CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
High Tech High Philadelphia CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
High Tech High Philadelphia CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
High Tech High Philadelphia CS	2001	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
High Tech High Philadelphia CS	2002	105	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Imani Educationl Circle CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Imani Educationl Circle CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Imani Educationl Circle CS	2000	294	1080	1212.3	-132.3	1110	1211.6	-101.6	1100	1191.1	-91.1	1110	1199.0	-89.0	.	.	.	.	.	.
Imani Educationl Circle CS	2001	361	1070	1158.8	-88.8	1150	1162.9	-12.9	1070	1172.5	-102.5	1160	1184.4	-24.4	.	.	.	.	.	.
Imani Educationl Circle CS	2002	425	1040	1149.7	-109.7	1100	1171.5	-71.5	1140	1199.5	-59.5	1110	1199.4	-89.4	.	.	.	.	.	.
Imhotep Institute Chs	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Imhotep Institute Chs	1999	194	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Imhotep Institute Chs	2000	300	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1050	1032.2	17.8	1030	1045.2	-15.2
Imhotep Institute Chs	2001	400	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1070	1060.0	10.0	1130	1110.0	20.0
Imhotep Institute Chs	2002	438	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1110	1088.6	21.4	1120	1077.5	42.5
Independence CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Independence CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Independence CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Independence CS	2001	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Independence CS	2002	280	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Keystone Education Center CS	1998	126	.	.	.	.	.	.	1080	1105.6	-25.6	1010	1177.7	-167.7	1000	818.3	181.7	1070	1126.4	-56.4
Keystone Education Center CS	1999	192	.	.	.	.	.	.	1120	1293.0	-173.0	1100	1322.0	-222.0	1170	948.0	222.0	1220	1192.0	28.0
Keystone Education Center CS	2000	212	.	.	.	.	.	.	1080	1154.5	-74.5	1010	1220.9	-210.9	1140	994.3	145.7	1150	1126.8	23.2
Keystone Education Center CS	2001	212	.	.	.	.	.	.	1150	1248.0	-98.0	1070	1223.0	-153.0	1120	1061.4	58.6	1130	1098.5	31.5
Keystone Education Center CS	2002	232	.	.	.	.	.	.	1170	1225.4	-55.4	1100	1225.8	-125.8	1060	1115.8	-55.8	1020	1148.5	-128.5
La Academia: Partnership CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
La Academia: Partnership CS	1999	77	.	.	.	.	.	.	1060	1127.4	-67.4	1030	1154.3	-124.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
La Academia: Partnership CS	2000	85	.	.	.	.	.	.	1010	1169.6	-159.6	1040	1278.6	-238.6	.	.	.	.	.	.
La Academia: Partnership CS	2001	102	.	.	.	.	.	.	1000	1219.9	-219.9	970	1253.8	-283.8	.	.	.	.	.	.
La Academia: Partnership CS	2002	90	.	.	.	.	.	.	1190	1117.6	72.4	1140	1081.4	58.6	1020	1027.5	-7.5	1020	1070.9	-50.9
Leadership Lrng Partners CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Leadership Lrng Partners CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Leadership Lrng Partners CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Leadership Lrng Partners CS	2001	375	1050	1099.0	-49.0	1090	1090.0	6.0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Leadership Lrng Partners CS	2002	556	1030	1109.9	-79.9	1070	1110.2	-40.2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Lincoln-Edison CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Lincoln-Edison CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Lincoln-Edison CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Lincoln-Edison CS	2001	710	1130	1146.2	-16.2	1100	1129.7	-29.7	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Lincoln-Edison CS	2002	726	1180	1156.0	24.0	1160	1142.4	17.6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table F:3

Charter School PSSA Scores by School, Year and Test

School Name	Year	Enrollment	Math Grade 5			Reading Grade 5			Math Grade 8			Reading Grade 8			Math Grade 11			Reading Grade 11		
			Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference
Manchester Academic CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Manchester Academic CS	1999	124	1090	1211.0	-121.0	1140	1169.0	-29.0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Manchester Academic CS	2000	156	1100	1162.6	-62.6	1120	1153.1	-33.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Manchester Academic CS	2001	165	1210	1228.7	-18.7	1180	1238.0	-58.0	1210	1210.6	-0.6	1300	1243.8	56.2	.	.	.	.	.	.
Manchester Academic CS	2002	159	1230	1232.9	-2.9	1300	1240.0	60.0	1160	1229.0	-69.0	1210	1238.5	-28.5	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mariana Bracetti Academy CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mariana Bracetti Academy CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mariana Bracetti Academy CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mariana Bracetti Academy CS	2001	159	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mariana Bracetti Academy CS	2002	601	.	.	.	.	.	.	1070	1107.8	-37.8	1040	1057.6	-17.6	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mast Community CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mast Community CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mast Community CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mast Community CS	2001	950	1190	1183.5	6.5	1240	1164.8	75.2	1230	1226.6	3.4	1240	1199.5	40.5	1150	1193.5	-43.5	1220	1211.7	8.3
Mast Community CS	2002	1029	1340	1268.7	71.3	1380	1273.3	106.7	1360	1317.9	42.1	1310	1296.0	14.0	1240	1346.5	-106.5	1240	1321.4	-81.4
Math Civics and Sciences CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Math Civics and Sciences CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Math Civics and Sciences CS	2000	688	1070	1114.5	-44.5	1090	1126.5	-36.5	1070	1117.2	-47.2	1050	1111.0	-61.0	.	.	.	.	.	.
Math Civics and Sciences CS	2001	748	1130	1076.2	53.8	1150	1066.5	83.5	1100	1121.1	-21.1	1110	1107.1	2.9	.	.	.	.	.	.
Math Civics and Sciences CS	2002	840	1140	1078.9	61.1	1130	1088.2	41.8	1150	1147.8	2.2	1150	1135.1	14.9	1100	1136.9	-36.9	1130	1120.4	9.6
Midwestern Regional Virtual CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Midwestern Regional Virtual CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Midwestern Regional Virtual CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Midwestern Regional Virtual CS	2001	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Midwestern Regional Virtual CS	2002	64	1020	.	.	1250	.	.	1140	.	.	1150	.	.	1170	.	.	1210	.	.
Mosaica Academy CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mosaica Academy CS	1999	450	1240	1277.2	-37.2	1220	1263.1	-43.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mosaica Academy CS	2000	501	1350	1394.7	-44.7	1350	1385.2	-35.2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mosaica Academy CS	2001	539	1310	1358.9	-48.9	1320	1351.6	-31.6	1320	1381.0	-61.0	1320	1375.8	-55.8	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mosaica Academy CS	2002	551	1290	1367.6	-77.6	1290	1362.3	-72.3	1330	1379.4	-49.4	1360	1380.3	-20.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
Multi-Cultural Academy CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Multi-Cultural Academy CS	1999*	121	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Multi-Cultural Academy CS	2000	150	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1060	1293.7	-233.7	1070	1186.8	-116.8
Multi-Cultural Academy CS	2001	165	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1130	1126.4	3.6	1200	1204.0	-4.0
Multi-Cultural Academy CS	2002	165	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1080	1079.8	0.2	1120	1046.3	73.7
New Foundations CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
New Foundations CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
New Foundations CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
New Foundations CS	2001	355	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
New Foundations CS	2002	387	1180	1308.3	-128.3	1250	1308.6	-58.6	1260	1294.7	-34.7	1260	1278.6	-18.6	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nittany Valley Charter School	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nittany Valley Charter School	1999	48	1520	1461.7	58.3	1460	1431.9	28.1	1580	1344.1	235.9	1450	1364.6	85.4	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nittany Valley Charter School	2000	48	1470	1505.0	-35.0	1480	1459.7	20.3	1510	1380.0	130.0	1500	1429.7	70.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nittany Valley Charter School	2001	48	.	1474.8	.	.	1474.7	.	.	1385.7	.	.	1446.6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nittany Valley Charter School	2002	48	1330	1452.9	-122.9	1260	1425.0	-165.0	1560	1365.6	194.4	1600	1378.9	221.1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Northeast Charter School	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Northeast Charter School	1999	20	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1140	1241.0	.	1110	1314.0	.
Northeast Charter School	2000	40	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1140	1335.8	-195.8	1040	1293.7	-253.7
Northeast Charter School	2001	57	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1213.1	.	.	1191.4	.	1070	1234.8	-164.8	980	1323.1	-343.1
Northeast Charter School	2002	59	.	.	.	.	.	.	1150	1266.1	-116.1	1230	1221.9	8.1	1030	1292.5	-262.5	880	1299.7	-419.7

Table F:3

Charter School PSSA Scores by School, Year and Test

School Name	Year	Enrollment	Math Grade 5			Reading Grade 5			Math Grade 8			Reading Grade 8			Math Grade 11			Reading Grade 11		
			Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference
Northside Urban Pathways CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Northside Urban Pathways CS	1999	122	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Northside Urban Pathways CS	2000	139	.	.	.	.	.	.	1130	1160.2	-30.2	1200	1199.3	0.7	1280	1162.9	117.1	1190	1167.1	22.9
Northside Urban Pathways CS	2001	139	.	.	.	.	.	.	1230	1233.0	-3.0	1280	1270.9	9.1	1200	1152.4	47.6	1170	1213.1	-43.1
Northside Urban Pathways CS	2002	199	.	.	.	.	.	.	1140	1200.8	-60.7	1100	1189.0	-89.0	1150	1205.0	-55.0	1130	1213.8	-83.7
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS	2001	203	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS	2002	326	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
PA Learners Online Reg Cyber CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
PA Learners Online Reg Cyber CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
PA Learners Online Reg Cyber CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
PA Learners Online Reg Cyber CS	2001	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
PA Learners Online Reg Cyber CS	2002	384	1260	1304.6	-44.6	1240	1318.7	-78.7	1180	1302.7	-122.7	1200	1268.9	-68.9	1200	1330.5	-130.5	1230	1260.9	-30.9
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	2001	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	2002	744	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
People for People CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
People for People CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
People for People CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
People for People CS	2001	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
People for People CS	2002	364	1100	1067.8	32.2	1120	1066.4	53.6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Harambee Inst CS	1998	220	1140	1210.0	-70.0	1030	1165.0	-135.0	1000	1248.0	-248.0	1000	1206.0	-206.0	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Harambee Inst CS	1999	224	1100	1259.0	-159.0	1150	1240.0	-90.0	1250	1197.0	53.0	1350	1210.0	140.0	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Harambee Inst CS	2000	231	1150	1250.9	-100.9	1180	1252.5	-72.5	1170	1221.2	-51.2	1190	1238.7	-48.7	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Harambee Inst CS	2001	240	1130	1284.9	-154.9	1110	1313.4	-203.4	1170	1262.9	-92.9	1190	1313.3	-123.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Harambee Inst CS	2002	261	1110	1269.6	-159.6	1140	1289.1	-149.1	1130	1283.4	-153.4	1160	1302.9	-142.9	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Performing Arts CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Performing Arts CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Performing Arts CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Performing Arts CS	2001	300	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phila Performing Arts CS	2002	351	1230	1271.6	-41.6	1250	1265.9	-15.9	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Philadelphia Academy CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Philadelphia Academy CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Philadelphia Academy CS	2000	625	1350	1468.7	-118.7	1340	1485.2	-145.2	1220	1421.0	-201.0	1280	1507.7	-227.7	.	.	.	.	.	.
Philadelphia Academy CS	2001	649	1420	1351.6	68.4	1360	1363.9	-3.9	1350	1342.6	7.4	1340	1368.0	-28.0	.	.	.	.	.	.
Philadelphia Academy CS	2002	654	1320	1374.0	-54.0	1330	1377.5	-47.5	1340	1354.8	-14.8	1360	1361.5	-1.5	.	.	.	.	.	.
Raising Horizons Quest CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Raising Horizons Quest CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Raising Horizons Quest CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Raising Horizons Quest CS	2001	302	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Raising Horizons Quest CS	2002	414	1060	1055.4	4.6	1120	1060.9	59.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Renaissance Acad -Edison CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Renaissance Acad -Edison CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Renaissance Acad -Edison CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Renaissance Acad -Edison CS	2001	659	1250	1317.1	-67.1	1300	1318.9	-18.9	1280	1346.6	-66.6	1250	1296.9	-46.9	.	.	.	.	.	.
Renaissance Acad -Edison CS	2002	731	1280	1323.6	-43.6	1270	1328.5	-58.5	1290	1345.9	-55.9	1290	1351.1	-61.1	.	.	.	.	.	.

Table F:3

Charter School PSSA Scores by School, Year and Test

School Name	Year	Enroll-ment	Math Grade 5			Reading Grade 5			Math Grade 8			Reading Grade 8			Math Grade 11			Reading Grade 11		
			Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference
Renaissance Advantage CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance Advantage CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance Advantage CS	2000	472	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance Advantage CS	2001	633	1040	1121.8	-81.8	1080	1126.3	-46.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance Advantage CS	2002	611	1030	1136.3	-106.3	1100	1146.4	-46.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance CS	2001	153	-	-	-	-	-	-	1120	1145.7	-25.7	1180	1153.4	26.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Renaissance CS	2002	177	-	-	-	-	-	-	1110	1155.6	-45.6	1150	1143.9	6.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Richard Allen Prep CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Richard Allen Prep CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Richard Allen Prep CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Richard Allen Prep CS	2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Richard Allen Prep CS	2002	177	1040	1142.0	-102.0	1060	1140.0	-80.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ridgeview Academy CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ridgeview Academy CS	1999	164	-	-	-	-	-	-	1130	1014.0	116.0	1140	984.0	156.0	1230	1038.0	192.0	1290	1031.0	259.0
Ridgeview Academy CS	2000	189	-	-	-	-	-	-	1060	1160.6	-100.6	1050	1231.8	-181.8	1150	955.6	194.4	1140	1110.6	29.4
Ridgeview Academy CS	2001	209	-	-	-	-	-	-	1100	1273.5	-173.5	1060	1273.6	-213.6	1110	1045.1	64.9	1100	1089.5	10.5
Ridgeview Academy CS	2002	194	-	-	-	-	-	-	1110	1244.2	-134.2	1080	1220.3	-140.3	1090	1175.3	-85.3	1090	1179.7	-89.7
Roberto Clemente CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Roberto Clemente CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Roberto Clemente CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Roberto Clemente CS	2001	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Roberto Clemente CS	2002	123	-	-	-	-	-	-	1140	1168.4	-28.4	1220	1140.5	79.5	1230	1053.8	176.2	1190	1073.6	116.4
Ronald H Brown CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ronald H Brown CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ronald H Brown CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ronald H Brown CS	2001	448	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ronald H Brown CS	2002	465	1090	1158.0	-68.0	1110	1153.0	-43.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Russell Byers CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Russell Byers CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Russell Byers CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Russell Byers CS	2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Russell Byers CS	2002	150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Souderton CS Collaborative	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Souderton CS Collaborative	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Souderton CS Collaborative	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Souderton CS Collaborative	2001	64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Souderton CS Collaborative	2002	85	1330	1457.9	-127.9	1360	1444.4	-84.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spectrum CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spectrum CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spectrum CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spectrum CS	2001	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spectrum CS	2002	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	950	1156.4	-206.4	890	1173.0	-283.0	1430	988.8	441.2	1370	1117.2	252.8
Sugar Valley Rural CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sugar Valley Rural CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sugar Valley Rural CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sugar Valley Rural CS	2001	173	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sugar Valley Rural CS	2002	214	1280	1345.2	-65.2	1280	1343.6	-63.6	1150	1320.8	-170.8	1070	1294.1	-224.0	1130	1286.5	-156.5	1080	1295.7	-215.7

Table F:3

Charter School PSSA Scores by School, Year and Test

School Name	Year	Enrollment	Math Grade 5			Reading Grade 5			Math Grade 8			Reading Grade 8			Math Grade 11			Reading Grade 11		
			Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference
Susq-Cyber Charter School	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Susq-Cyber Charter School	1999	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1140	1482.0	-342.0	1220	1478.0	-258.0
Susq-Cyber Charter School	2000	103	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1160	1490.0	-330.0	1310	1409.0	-99.0
Susq-Cyber Charter School	2001	77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Susq-Cyber Charter School	2002	81	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1160	1409.9	-249.9	1220	1378.3	-158.3
Sylvan Heights Science CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sylvan Heights Science CS	1999	84	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sylvan Heights Science CS	2000	131	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sylvan Heights Science CS	2001	176	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sylvan Heights Science CS	2002	189	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TEACH-The Einstein Acad. CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TEACH-The Einstein Acad. CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TEACH-The Einstein Acad. CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TEACH-The Einstein Acad. CS	2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TEACH-The Einstein Acad. CS	2002	2695	1160	-	-	1260	-	-	1240	-	-	1320	-	-	1200	-	-	1280	-	-
The Laboratory Charter School	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Laboratory Charter School	1999	340	1080	1073.0	7.0	1140	1030.8	109.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Laboratory Charter School	2000	418	1190	1060.0	130.0	1200	1055.5	144.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Laboratory Charter School	2001	365	1400	1062.0	338.0	1490	1017.7	472.3	1400	1128.0	272.0	1460	1076.8	383.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Laboratory Charter School	2002	505	1470	1066.0	404.0	1400	1053.1	346.9	1520	1130.5	389.5	1480	1103.6	376.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Preparatory Charter School	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Preparatory Charter School	1999	150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Preparatory Charter School	2000	294	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Preparatory Charter School	2001	365	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1150	1210.6	-60.6	1140	1259.1	-119.1
The Preparatory Charter School	2002	449	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1210	1246.1	-36.1	1190	1223.3	-33.3
Thurgood Marshall Acad CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thurgood Marshall Acad CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thurgood Marshall Acad CS	2000	199	1060	1178.4	-118.4	1070	1159.9	-89.9	1070	1079.5	-9.5	1190	1071.4	118.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thurgood Marshall Acad CS	2001	215	1040	1161.6	-121.6	1080	1139.6	-59.6	1090	1181.0	-91.0	1150	1165.6	-15.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Thurgood Marshall Acad CS	2002	188	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Universal Institute CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Universal Institute CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Universal Institute CS	2000	308	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Universal Institute CS	2001	386	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Universal Institute CS	2002	446	1120	1228.6	-108.6	1160	1241.9	-81.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Urban League of Pittsburgh CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Urban League of Pittsburgh CS	1999	77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Urban League of Pittsburgh CS	2000	94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Urban League of Pittsburgh CS	2001	114	1190	1147.5	42.5	1140	1131.6	8.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Urban League of Pittsburgh CS	2002	120	1110	1155.1	-45.1	1140	1144.6	-4.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Village CS of Chester-Upland	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Village CS of Chester-Upland	1999	245	1110	1171.2	-61.2	1130	1127.4	2.6	1000	967.9	32.1	1080	966.6	113.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Village CS of Chester-Upland	2000	303	1010	1194.7	-184.7	1050	1183.4	-133.4	1070	1139.7	-69.7	1090	1109.8	-19.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Village CS of Chester-Upland	2001	397	1070	1127.5	-57.5	1110	1149.4	-39.4	1080	1148.8	-68.8	1100	1148.8	-48.8	1010	1066.4	-56.4	1110	1126.0	-16.0
Village CS of Chester-Upland	2002	639	1040	1085.6	-45.6	1070	1078.8	-8.8	1080	1117.2	-37.2	1170	1096.3	73.7	1010	1042.6	-32.6	990	1037.5	-47.5
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	1999	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	2001	96	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	2002	93	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table F-3
Charter School PSSA Scores by School, Year and Test

School Name	Year	Enrollment	Math Grade 5			Reading Grade 5			Math Grade 8			Reading Grade 8			Math Grade 11			Reading Grade 11		
			Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference	Actual	Predicted	Difference
Wakisha CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wakisha CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wakisha CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wakisha CS	2001	[illegible]	.	.	.	.	.	.	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	7.8	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wakisha CS	2002	[illegible]	.	.	.	.	.	.	1150	[illegible]	4.8	1150	[illegible]	[illegible]	.	.	.	.	.	.
West Oak Lane Charter School	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
West Oak Lane Charter School	1999	[illegible]	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
West Oak Lane Charter School	2000	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
West Oak Lane Charter School	2001	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
West Oak Lane Charter School	2002	576	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Western Pennsylvania Cyber CS	1998		.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Western Pennsylvania Cyber CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Western Pennsylvania Cyber CS	2000	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Western Pennsylvania Cyber CS	2001	505	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Western Pennsylvania Cyber CS	2002	1146	1320	1295.0	25.0	1380	1298.0	82.0	1340	1347.9	-7.9	1380	1335.1	44.9	1240	1334.3	-94.3	1340	1295.5	44.5
Wonderland CS	1998	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wonderland CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wonderland CS	2000	26	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wonderland CS	2001	34	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wonderland CS	2002	34	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
World Communications CS	1998	270	.	.	.	.	.	.	1110	1164.3	-54.3	1150	1136.2	13.8	.	.	.	.	.	.
World Communications CS	1999	467	.	.	.	.	.	.	1160	1128.0	32.0	1160	1125.4	34.6	.	.	.	.	.	.
World Communications CS	2000	482	.	.	.	.	.	.	1100	1176.1	-76.1	1100	1159.8	-59.8	1100	1217.6	-117.6	1090	1155.4	-65.4
World Communications CS	2001	418	.	.	.	.	.	.	1200	1153.7	46.3	1220	1150.3	69.7	1220	1165.0	55.0	1280	1207.9	72.1
World Communications CS	2002	387	.	.	.	.	.	.	1220	1164.3	55.7	1290	1151.8	138.2	1470	1161.4	308.6	1360	1149.8	210.2
Young Scholars CS	1998	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Young Scholars CS	1999	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Young Scholars CS	2000	61	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Young Scholars CS	2001	120	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Young Scholars CS	2002	192	.	.	.	.	.	.	1180	1147.9	32.1	1210	1134.2	75.8	.	.	.	.	.	.
Youth Build Phila CS	1998	149	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Youth Build Phila CS	1999	175	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Youth Build Phila CS	2000	210	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Youth Build Phila CS	2001	225	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Youth Build Phila CS	2002	225	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

* Note that the 1999 PSSA results for Multi-Cultural Academy were not available.

Table F:4
Charter School PSSA Change Scores

School Name	*Number of Change Scores*	Average Annual Change Scores			
		average	*st dev*	*min*	*max*
21st Century Cyber CS	0	.	.	.	.
Alliance for Progress CS	1	-82.0	.	-82.0	-82.0
Architecture and Design Chs	2	26.3	39.6	-1.7	54.2
Bucks County Montessori CS	0	.	.	.	.
Career Connections Chs	0	.	.	.	.
Center for Economics & Law CS	2	5.2	25.2	-12.6	23.0
Centre Learning Community CS	3	-24.7	10.3	-36.5	-17.5
Chester Charter School	3	27.8	110.7	-100.0	93.9
Chester Co Family Academy CS	0	.	.	.	.
Chester Community CS	2	40.5	142.9	-60.5	141.5
Christopher Columbus CS	0	.	.	.	.
Collegium CS	2	55.2	153.4	-53.3	163.6
Community Academy of Philadelphia CS	4	24.0	116.4	-109.0	172.3
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS	0	.	.	.	.
Delaware Valley Chs	1	73.8	.	73.8	73.8
Erin Dudley Forbes CS	0	.	.	.	.
Eugenio Maria DE Hostos CS	3	-16.4	22.9	-41.0	4.2
Family Charter School	0	.	.	.	.
Franklin Towne Chs	0	.	.	.	.
Freire CS	2	9.9	3.0	7.9	12.0
GECAC Community CS	2	-31.0	79.5	-87.3	25.2
Germantown Settlement CS	2	17.8	29.7	-3.2	38.7
High Tech High Philadelphia CS	0	.	.	.	.
Imani Educationl Circle CS	2	10.5	50.7	-25.4	46.3
Imhotep Institute Chs	2	15.3	2.3	13.7	17.0
Independence CS	0	.	.	.	.
Keystone Education Center CS	4	-18.6	24.4	-51.2	7.1
La Academia:The Partnership CS	3	38.0	202.5	-103.3	270.0
Leadership Lrng Partners CS	1	-35.5	.	-35.5	-35.5
Lincoln-Edison CS	1	43.8	.	43.8	43.8
Manchester Academic CS	3	21.6	24.2	-4.9	42.6
Mariana Bracetti Academy CS	0	.	.	.	.
Mast Community CS	1	-7.4	.	-7.4	-7.4
Math Civics and Sciences CS	2	31.4	64.6	-14.3	77.1
Midwestern Regional Virtual CS	0	.	.	.	.
Mosaica Academy CS	3	-4.9	4.8	-9.4	0.2
Multi-Cultural Academy CS	2	106.1	97.5	37.2	175.1
New Foundations CS	0	.	.	.	.
Nittany Valley Charter School	1	-55.5	.	-55.5	-55.5

Table F:4
Charter School PSSA Change Scores

	Number of	Average Annual Change Scores			
School Name	*Change Scores*	*average*	*st dev*	*min*	*max*
Northeast Charter School	3	-15.0	49.7	-72.2	18.0
Northside Urban Pathways CS	2	-49.9	35.2	-74.8	-25.0
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS	0	.	.	.	.
PA Learners Online Regional Cyber CS	0	.	.	.	.
Pennsylvania Virtual CS	0	.	.	.	.
People for People CS	0	.	.	.	.
Phila Harambee Inst CS	4	3.4	102.2	-75.3	150.8
Phila Performing Arts CS	0	.	.	.	.
Philadelphia Academy CS	2	71.9	158.7	-40.4	184.1
Raising Horizons Quest CS	0	.	.	.	.
Renaissance Academy-Edison CS	1	-4.9	.	-4.9	-4.9
Renaissance Advantage CS	1	-12.3	.	-12.3	-12.3
Renaissance CS	1	-20.3	.	-20.3	-20.3
Richard Allen Prep CS	0	.	.	.	.
Ridgeview Academy CS	3	-97.7	85.8	-195.4	-34.5
Roberto Clemente CS	0	.	.	.	.
Ronald H Brown CS	0	.	.	.	.
Russell Byers CS	0	.	.	.	.
Souderton CS Collaborative	0	.	.	.	.
Spectrum CS	0	.	.	.	.
Sugar Valley Rural CS	0	.	.	.	.
Susq-Cyber Charter School	1	85.5	.	85.5	85.5
Sylvan Heights Science CS	0	.	.	.	.
TEACH-The Einstein Academy CS	0	.	.	.	.
The Laboratory Charter School	3	107.0	110.8	12.8	229.1
The Preparatory Charter School	1	55.1	.	55.1	55.1
Thurgood Marshall Acad CS	1	-47.2	.	-47.2	-47.2
Universal Institute CS	0	.	.	.	.
Urban League of Pittsburgh CS	1	-50.3	.	-50.3	-50.3
Village CS of Chester-Upland	3	-12.7	96.2	-123.6	47.4
Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	0	.	.	.	.
Wakisha CS	1	26.9	.	26.9	26.9
West Oak Lane Charter School	2	46.7	2.8	44.8	48.7
Western Pennsylvania Cyber CS	0	.	.	.	.
Wonderland CS	0	.	.	.	.
World Communications CS	4	49.6	114.5	-113.0	140.5
Young Scholars CS	0	.	.	.	.
Youth Build Phila CS	0	.	.	.	.

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